

On Suttavada

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Foreword

In recent years, new trends have become increasingly widespread in the Buddhist environment, emphasizing the enjoyment of practice, relaxation, and an "easy" attitude to practice. It so happened that the authors of this article encountered perhaps the most prominent representative of this kind of currents, namely the so-called Suttavada. This school was founded in the 2000s by a Buddhist monk of American origin — Bhante Vimalaramsi (his worldly name is Marvel Logan). The meditation method it promotes is called TWIM¹, the basic technique of working with distractions of the mind is called 6R².

The main, and perhaps the only motivation for us in this case is conscience, a sense of duty, a sense of responsibility. For several years we have been spreading the Suttavada on the territory of the CIS, and now, having finally understood the pernicious essence of this teaching, we decided that simply closing this activity would not be enough. One more thing needs to be done.

It is necessary to explain in detail, point by point and reasoned, what is wrong with this school, and, by its example, with all similar schools. This will help people avoid similar traps in the future, as well as better understand what the Buddha actually taught.

In addition, we want to believe that our former teachers from the Suttavada are not conscious villains, but only conscientiously deluded. Therefore, this article is an act of our respect and student duty towards these people who have been kind to us. We cherish the hope that after reading these lines, they will come to their senses.

Yes, it will be difficult to make such a metanoia, because over the years the Suttavada has gained fame, which, among other things, led to the material prosperity of the school and its teachers. In addition, it is very difficult in itself to admit your mistakes and start all over again. We know this by ourselves. But what they are doing is leading those who have trusted them to a catastrophe, and it is leading them to a catastrophe of even greater proportions. No one who calls himself a disciple of the Buddha can deny the reality of this catastrophe. This is not a joke at all, so in some places this article may seem unnecessarily harsh towards Bhante Vimalaramsi, Delson Armstrong and the Suttavada.

So, the question of why we wrote this article can be answered as follows: to explain the differences between the Dhamma and the Suttavada in a reasoned way. To the question of why we did it, the answer will be – to help people avoid such traps, and to help our former teacher get out of the situation in which they found themselves.

So, it is precisely this goal — a reasoned explanation of the discrepancy and contradiction between the Dhamma and the Suttavada — that this article pursues.

Let's get started.

¹ Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation

² 6R or 6R's is an integral part and foundation of the TWIM, the method of how to manage the distractions of mind's attention. In Suttavada, 6R is positioned as the true practical embodiment of Right Effort from the Noble Eightfold Path. This formula codifies the sequence of actions when distractions appear - Recognize, Release, Relax, Re-Smile, Return and Repeat

A brief list of the theses of the Suttavada teaching

In this section, we will list the most explicit points characterizing the Suttavada approach to the Dhamma, as well as our brief objections to them. A more detailed analysis of specific topics will be given in the following sections.

1. We are the real teaching of the Buddha, we reject the authority of canonical commentaries and teach in strict accordance with the Suttas, therefore we are the Suttavada – In reality, Bhante Vimalaramsi (BV), although he rejects canonical commentaries, but at the same time creates his own commentaries. BV criticizes the main translators of the Pali Canon, for example Bhikkhu Bodhi, whose translations exactly coincide with the consolidated opinion of other translators. BV also creates its own translations and editions of the Suttas, its own "translations" of the fundamental foundations of the Buddha's Teaching, and such as have not been for more than 2500 years. As a result, the Buddha's Teaching in the Suttavada actually turns into its opposite.

BV also rejects many Suttas, unreasonably writing off points that contradict his doctrine, on the fact that it is allegedly distorted by "Hindus". That is, the fact that the representatives of the Sangha (in both meanings — both the 8 types of Noble Persons and the community of monks and laypeople) have worked "poorly" for more than 2500 years and now BV has to correct their mistakes. Also, knowing the methodology of teaching BV, you may notice that there is no metta with a spiritual friend, as well as the overcoming barriers practice and the Practice of Forgiveness in the Suttas, but there is just in the canonical commentaries rejected by BV. There will be a separate chapter on the practices of the Suttavada.

2. Smile and laugh in what is happening in your mind. Develop the habit of smiling always, let the mind be light — Working on yourself according to the Suttavada is to develop a smile and laugh at what is happening and over the contents of the mind. This is contrary to the Teaching set forth in the Suttas.

3. 6R is the highlight of the BV method, although he claims that it is the highlight of the Buddha method. All problems in meditation and, consequently, in life, can be solved with the help of the magic method 6R – according to BV, this is the realization of the entire path of the Buddha in one action. Recognize distraction, Release it, Relax, Smile happily, Return your attention to the object of meditation and Repeat this process when the next distraction appears.

As confirmed by Delson Armstrong (DA) – who is officially the most advanced student of BV, and unofficially – is a "suttavada-arahant" – 6R is the Path. We will also tell you more about 6R below, in the section devoted to the practice of the Suttavada.

However, this method is also not in the Suttas, at least in the place that the Suttavada defines it.

4. Anyone can become an advanced meditator very quickly and easily achieve Jhanas in a matter of days of TWIM meditation – referring to the fact that in the Suttas many people

quickly became sotapannas and even anagami (and there is at least one arahant), BV created his own interpretation of the concept of "jhana", arguing that jhanas as they are traditionally understood in Buddhism are not actually Buddhist jhanas, but penetrated into Buddhism from Hinduism together with the practice of so-called "one-point concentration". BV, for example, claims that:

- a. In the first jhana, speech does not stop. However, the Suttas say that speech stops¹, and research can be carried out by pure speech formation, which is exactly why the first jhana is needed – for purified guidance and retention of the mind.
- b. In the fourth jhana, the breathing does not stop, although the Suttas say that breath ins and breath outs stop in the fourth jhana². With BV, for 4 days ex-addict or just a housewife can enter fourth jhana, about which Buddha says that it stops breathing, and can develop superpowers, as well as the highest liberation.
- c. In the arupa jhanas that is in jhanas WITHOUT A BODY (a-rupa) – according to BV you can hear and feel the bodily contact and other phenomena perceived by the senses, although Suttas say that arupa is a condition in which the perception of multiplicity is overcome, and perception caused by the senses fades³.

More details about the practice of jhanas in the Suttavada will be discussed separately in section 3.7.

5. Nibbana is a deep state of relief when you come out of Nirodha. Nirodha – according to BV – is, in fact, a direct entry into a sort of dreamless sleep or blackout. However, the Buddha says that Nibbana is the complete destruction of the Craving.

6. The Suttavada teaches the Harmonious Path and the Effective Path, not the Middle Path of Practice – we will also tell you about this in detail in the section 2.2.

7. Bhante states that the Suttas say, "The Dhamma is pleasant in the beginning, pleasant in the middle and pleasant in the end." Quote from the Suttas: "The Dhamma is beautiful in the beginning, beautiful in the middle and beautiful in the end."⁴ What BV translates as "pleasant" (the Pali word *kalyāṇa*) has a different meaning: beautiful, excellent, good. Describing the Dhamma as "pleasant", BV radically changes the meaning of the practice, which will be discussed in the following sections. But, having said that the practice of the Dhamma should be pleasant, BV begins to contradict himself: forcing students to perform an extremely painful practice of forgiveness or to sit motionless for more than 3 hours in a row, and even with a smile, he often turns the practice into torture. And at the same time, by preaching the "pleasant approach" and 6R, BV actually suppresses the students' knowledge of the First Noble Truth –

¹ See for example SN 36.11, Rahogata Sutta

² See for example SN 36.11, Rahogata Sutta

³ See for example SN 40.5, Akasanancayatanapanha Sutta

⁴ See for example MN 148, Cacakka Sutta.

suffering. For more information, see the section on the doctrinal differences between the Suttavada and the Buddha's Dhamma.

8. It is very easy to become a Noble Person and gain knowledge of the path and liberation with the magic 6R, TWIM and Smile – BV, who is considered "suttavada-anagami" himself personally and through teaching assistants distributes the titles sotapanna, sakadagami, anagami and even arahant (the first suttavada-arahant is Delson Armstrong), as Boy Scout badges or shoulder straps. After all, in the Suttas, people often achieved fruits. Thus, a false proof of effectiveness works here: "We are effective because you reach jhanas and Nibbana with us, but jhanas and Nibbana are what we call such, and not what is described in the Suttas."

Next, we will take a closer look at individual topics.

1. How universal is the Suttavada method

In order to begin a detailed examination of the Suttavada and TWIM, as a teaching and method attributed to the Buddha, let's look at the variety of types of personalities capable (and unable) to learn, according to the Suttas.

As follows from AN 10.21, among the ten powers of the Buddha, most of them can be used for pedagogical purposes – 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th. Thus, the Buddha perfectly saw the variety of types of beings, and, in particular, people.

In addition, the Buddha, being the most capable of the arahants, fully understood the Dhamma and language, that is, in terms of the Suttas, he possessed Four Analytical Knowledges¹.

This also explains why the arahants used the same formulations and explanations as the Buddha. They did so not because of fanaticism, but because, firstly, it is impossible to formulate the Dhamma better than the Buddha did, and secondly, because all arahants had a common knowledge about Liberation, about the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now let's try to collect according to the Suttas those categories of people that the Buddha singled out. Based on what diversity in abilities, predispositions and inclinations of beings, he formulated the Dhamma in such a way that it was universal, useful and effective for everyone? Having such a list of categories of people, even if you have a minimum of information from the theses about the Suttavada and its philosophy, you will be able to draw a preliminary conclusion for which of the whole variety of groups in principle the Suttavada and TWIM with the philosophy of total relaxation, all-acceptance, all-letting-go and smiles could be suitable at least theoretically.

1.1. Up or Down

Let's begin by classifying the types of personalities according to their spiritual qualities. The Buddha spoke of four such options:²

- The one who goes from darkness to darkness;
- The one who goes from darkness to light;
- Tot The one who goes from light to darkness;
- The one who goes from light to light.

This is a general tendency of people to spiritual degradation and vice versa to spiritual development, so to speak - to move up or down

In such a division, as you can see, we are not talking about practice, but about a tendency, however, of course, people have the opportunity and enough free will to engage in spiritual development consciously. And those who come to this (and there are such among each of the above four categories) are divided into four more types.

¹ See AN 4.172, Vibhatti Sutta.

² See AN 4.85, Tamotama Sutta

1.2. Pleasant or Painful

Four Types Of Practice:¹

- Painful practice with slow direct knowledge.
- Painful practice with quick direct knowledge.
- Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge.
- Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge.

The difference between Painful and Pleasant Practice is a natural tendency to Craving, Anger and Delusions.

(1) And what, monks, is painful practice with slow direct knowledge? Here is a certain person by nature has a strong tendency to craving and often experiences pain and despondency because of craving. "By nature, he has a strong tendency to anger and often experiences pain and despondency because of anger. By nature, he has a strong tendency to delusion and often experiences pain and despondency due to delusion.

(3) And what is pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge? Here is a certain person by nature does not have a strong tendency to craving and does not often experience pain and despondency because of craving. By nature, he does not have a strong tendency to anger and does not often experience pain and despondency because of anger. By nature, he does not have a strong tendency to delusion and does not often experience pain and despondency because of delusion."

To put it simply, a pleasant practice will be for a person who is not prone to strong emotions and acute reactions, not prone to strong attachments and dependencies.

Thus, one can understand the most important thing that the Buddha taught all people capable of practicing in principle, and formulated and explained the Dhamma in such a way that it was understood by people of all types.

Based on these two Suttas alone, we can already get 16 combinations.

#	Direction	Type of practice
1	From light to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge
2	From light to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge
3	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge
4	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge
5	From light to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge
6	From light to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge
7	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge
8	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge
9	From dark to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge
10	From dark to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge
11	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge
12	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge
13	From dark to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge
14	From dark to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge
15	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge

¹ See AN 4.162, Vitthara Sutta.

16	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge
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1.3. Gentle or Severe

In addition to the 16 categories of trainees, it is also necessary to say about the approach in training these people. In AN 4.111, the Buddha talks about three methods that he uses for teaching. One terminal situation is added to them, so to speak, when the Buddha does not teach the Dhamma. In the sutta, he calls it "killing."

"Kesi, I train a tamed person [sometimes] with gentle, [sometimes] with rigidity, [sometimes] with both gentle and rigidity.

"If the tamed person is not influenced by either soft training, or hard, or soft and hard— then I kill him, Kesi."

Thus, we get four options for people from 16 categories, which are added from the position of the training method. That is, there are 64 categories of people, 16 of which are "untrained", but 48 are those categories that can understand and realize the Dhamma.

1.4. Total by types of students

Let's summarize the principle of forming the final table:

1. each person has a vector defined by his kamma – previous actions, luck, fate – in a modern way:

- a. from - to - ,
- b. from - to +,
- c. from + to -
- d. from + to +

2. Each of the previous four categories who will practice is divided into categories depending on the strength of the natural inclination to craving, anger and delusions and the strength of the 5 qualities. Conditionally:

- a. purposeless passionate
- b. purposeful passionate
- c. non-purposeful non-passionate
- d. purposeful non-passionate

In total, at this stage we have 16 types.

3. Each of the 16 types of practitioners, due to understanding, intelligence, perspicacity, etc., is trained by one of the methods or leaves training

- a. with gentle

- b. with severe
- c. with gentle and with severe
- d. and he/she is "killed"

In total, we have 64 categories of practitioners.

So in brief:

1. There are four types of personalities
2. Each type can have one of four types of practice
3. Each of the four types of personalities with any of the four types of practice can be taught by three methods or stop learning.

So the summary table of types or categories of students:

#	Direction	Type of practice	Type of teaching
1	From light to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
2	From light to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
3	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
4	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
5	From light to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
6	From light to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
7	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
8	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
9	From dark to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
10	From dark to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
11	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
12	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
13	From dark to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
14	From dark to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
15	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
16	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle
17	From light to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
18	From light to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
19	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
20	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
21	From light to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
22	From light to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
23	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
24	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
25	From dark to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
26	From dark to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
27	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
28	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
29	From dark to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe

30	From dark to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
31	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Severe
32	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Severe
33	From light to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
34	From light to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
35	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
36	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
37	From light to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
38	From light to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
39	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
40	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
41	From dark to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
42	From dark to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
43	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
44	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
45	From dark to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
46	From dark to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
47	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
48	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle & Severe
49	From light to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
50	From light to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
51	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
52	From light to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
53	From light to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
54	From light to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
55	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
56	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
57	From dark to dark	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
58	From dark to dark	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
59	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
60	From dark to dark	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
61	From dark to light	Painful practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
62	From dark to light	Painful practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"
63	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	"Killing"
64	From dark to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	"Killing"

1.5. Who could theoretically match the Suttavada method

Thus we get the full scope of the pedagogical genius of the Buddha. The Buddha, for sure, saw a lot more categories, because he knew the minds of beings, their inclinations, their past lives and his connection from past lives with these beings, which gave him the opportunity to teach incredibly individually.

We can remember, for example, the sutta AN 4.170 where four types of practice are listed. It is said that every arahant becomes such through one of these ways or through their combination. This is when (1) samatha (calm of mind) is cultivated before vipassana (insight), (2) vipassana before samatha, (3) samatha and vipassana in conjunction, (4) there is direct immersion into samadhi (the concentration). So for every of these ways there were specific methods of practice. However, here Suttavada contradicts Suttas as well claiming that Buddha taught the third way only. (Also the treat the word Samadhi not as concentration but as a "collectedness".)

So, even if we take the shortest list, we see as many as 48 categories of those who are capable of learning, and since it is necessary to understand well those who are not capable of learning, then all 64 categories. All these categories of people require a different approach.

However, BV and the teachers of the Suttavada, in fact, offer only one approach – a smile, letting go of everything, relaxation, and so on. Let's look at the list of categories of students. In what case could the Suttavada approach, at least theoretically, work? Obviously, only two categories could be suitable here:

#	Direction	Type of practice	Type of teaching
7	From light to light	Pleasant practice with slow direct knowledge	Gentle
8	From light to light	Pleasant practice with quick direct knowledge	Gentle

It would seem that the 15th and 16th categories could also be suitable, where all the characteristics are the same, except for the first one: "From dark to light". However, persons of this kind tend to work hard on themselves, and that is why they move from darkness to light. So, the philosophy of all-relaxation, all-acceptance, all-letting is a real poison for such people, since it teaches them not to do what they absolutely need to do, namely, to work hard, including in meditation. Needless to say, the other categories are not suitable even more so.

So, out of 48 or 64 categories, only two – and even then only theoretically – fit the philosophy of the Suttavada. – why only theoretically? Because even learning with gentle in any case involves the need to convey the Right Teachings to the student:

"The gentle way is this: "This is good conduct by way of body. These are the results of good conduct of body. This is good conduct by way of speech. These are the results of good conduct by way of speech. This is good conduct by way of mind. These are the results of good conduct by way of mind. This is life as a god. This is life as a human."¹

¹ See AN 4.111, Kesi Sutta.

Nevertheless, BV and the teachers of the Suttavada teach to look at everything not from the perspective of the good and bad, but as harmonious and inharmonious or, in case of DA, as effective and ineffective.

Let's take a general look at how the abolition of the concepts of "right"/good and "wrong"/bad in the Suttavada will affect people with different vectors, in particular downward vectors and Painful types of Practices.

The danger and harmfulness of this distortion, which arose in the Suttavada, when BV and DA threw out the Middle and Right links of the Path and replaced them with Harmony and Efficiency, we will also talk in more detail in the following chapters. And now let's briefly consider how the abolition of the concepts of "right" (good) and "wrong" (bad) in the Suttavada affects people of different types.

So, BV and other Suttavada teachers actually teach only a method that could lead to the awakening of only people who go "from light to light" and who should be taught with gentle. But even this would be possible only if there was the Right View. That is, in the end, the Suttavada method cannot lead to the awakening of anyone. Nevertheless, people of these two categories turn out to be the most desirable type of disciples for the Suttavada.

Of the remaining categories, some simply get stuck in development at one stage or another, but for some this approach to practice leads to destructive results. It is to such people that the Suttavada applies a method in some sense similar to "killing" in the Teachings of the Noble Ones, in fact excluding them from their school. They are either accused of not doing what they were taught, or they are told that they should not practice meditation at all! At the same time, most of these people do not belong to those who are really subject to "killing" according to the Suttas. They only require other approaches in practice, which are not only not applied in the Suttavada, but are also declared wrong, contrary to what the Buddha taught.

In the Suttavada, they teach one TWIM pattern: to smile, laugh at what is happening, let go of everything that appears in your mind, and go with the flow that paves 6R in your mind, losing the body in complete relaxation, culminating in what they call "nirodha" – and which in fact is nothing more than a relaxation lapse into a deep dreamless sleep – this state is familiar to anyone who has practiced yoga nidra.

On other types of practitioners, the practice of letting go and relaxing will have a devastating effect – either because of the kammic vector, or because of the amount of craving, anger and delusions even with the right vector.

But let us repeat: in any case, what the Suttavada leads to, even for those who succeed in TWIM, is not only not salvation in the Buddhist sense, but is something opposite, which we will try to show in the following sections.

1.6. On Painful Practices

Let's look at the practices that the Buddha recommended for "painful" practitioners and compare them with the Suttavadin approach. Perhaps the incompatibility of "Harmony" and "Efficiency" with the Middle Way and the Right Views ... the Right Concentration will become obvious to the reader by the end of this chapter. So, for Painful Practitioners, the Buddha gives the following recommendations¹:

(1) And what, monks, is painful practice with slow direct knowledge? Here a monk abides in contemplation of the unattractiveness of the body, perceiving the disgust of food, perceiving non-admiration for the whole world, contemplating impermanence in all conditioned phenomena. And the perception of death is well established in him internally.

1.6.1. Unattractiveness of Body

The practice of developing the perception of the unattractiveness of the body is viewing body parts, organs and feces, pus, mucus, blood, sweat – it is inharmonious, it is ugly, it is ineffective, because here we do not follow the path of least resistance, especially for people with the Pleasant Practice, but this is exactly the painful practice that the Buddha prescribed to everyone, in the suttas common to all types of personalities, such as MN 10 and DN 22.

The second part of the practice of unattractiveness of the body is the mental examination of corpses in 9 stages of decomposition, including the most disgusting – such as a bloated corpse and a worm-eaten corpse, which, of course, is completely out of harmony and incompatible with smiles, soft laughter and the acceptance of the "Harmonious Path". As for Efficiency, such a practice turns out to be simply meaningless: the most effective thing would be not to engage in such unpleasant practices, but simply to relax and fall asleep without dreams in nirodha, and besides, to be considered an arahant at the same time. Recall that according to BV, Dhamma is pleasant at the beginning, pleasant in the middle and pleasant at the end.

The other two practices that we will consider are highly specialized Painful Practices for the appropriate type of people.

1.6.2. Perception of Death

By doing this practice, the practitioner gradually goes through the process of death. When a real death occurs in a non-practicing person, an accelerated version of such "meditation" takes place and it looks like agony, fear, pain, all clinging and, of course, the real physical sensations of death. In meditation, this happens gently and almost completely under the control of the meditator. But this is definitely a terrible and painful practice for most people, especially for those to whom this practice is addressed – for people with painful practice.

And again we will recall the "pleasantness" of the Dhamma, according to the Suttavada.

¹ See AN 4.163, Asubha Sutta.

1.6.3. Disgust of Food

Now let's look at the practice of disgusting food – the most practical sutta here is "The Flesh of the Son."¹ This practice is necessary for people with Painful Practice, as their attachment to food is very strong. No matter how much you do 6R, no matter how much you "radiate metta", no matter how much you accept your imperfections according to the BV method, such a person is only waiting for breakdowns or, at best, trampling on the spot. Only this practice of going straight into the "unpleasant", absolutely not "harmonious", can help such a person.

BV himself often says in lectures that "food is not dukkha"“ "I want some of that dukkha", whereas material food is one of the types of nutrition or fuel of samsaric existence, and is really painful. If a person understands what samsara is, and how pervasive sensual desire, anger and delusions are deadly, if he understands how food keeps creatures in low worlds, or even pulls them into low ones (which is why it is in the first place in the list of four types of fuel), then how can he allow such statements?

I must say, this practice would not have hurt Bhanta himself very much if he, considering himself Anagami, had not developed an understanding of food as the fuel of existence.

What kind of pleasantness, harmony and efficiency can we talk about if the Buddha suggests looking at any meal as eating the flesh of a beloved child, whom you personally had to kill, skin, butcher and cook to have some meat for the road, so as not to die in the desert? Neither Bhante Vimalaramsi nor Delson Armstrong would have had the tongue to call it harmony or efficiency if they had looked at the publicly available Suttas with a look that was not soiled by their own doctrine – the doctrine of pleasantness, relaxation and a smile. And this really frightening practice is a perfect example of how neither "efficiency" nor "harmony" can be the Buddha's Dhamma. And that it is the Middle that is needed – and eating the flesh of the "son" is an example of a real Middle, which consists in refusing both indulgence in sensual pleasures and austerity with its self-exhaustion through starvation, etc. The middle is not a compromise with ignorance and craving, as in the case of "harmony", and not the path of least resistance, as in the case of "efficiency".

1.7. On what BV and DA do

Unfortunately we have to state that in fact, Bhante Vimalaramsi and Delson Johnson distorted the Buddha's words in the Suttas, ignoring references to the need to know suffering from it and changing those terms that do not fit into their doctrine – for example, "right", "concentration", "effort", etc. Where possible, they wrote off what does not fit into their doctrine to later distortions and interpolation of Hindus. And all this is because it contradicts their personal experience of relaxation and letting go meditation. And this crippled Dhamma that does not lead to liberation even those 2 categories of people out of 64, they are teaching.

¹ See SN 12.63, Puttamamsa Sutta.

Since they have eliminated the Middle, they teach the complete relaxation, they teach to smile and let go – something that the Buddha could not teach as a common practice, because the complete relaxation for a person with a downward vector is a fall, degradation, this is an indulgence of passions and unwholesome habits. To call aspects of the path effective and harmonious is equivalent to signing a torture sentence for such people, because if such a person sits down and just waits and relaxes – then they will fall. If they move along the path of least resistance – they will fall.

Whereas the absence of the Middle for people of Pleasant Practice simply does not lead to anything, leads them to a dead end, then for people of Painful Practice, the absence of the Middle ground is death. A simple "radiance" from the head or around the body, as BV and DA teach, creates increasing tension for such people instead of relaxation, exacerbates sensual desires, anger and delusions up to nervous breakdowns, tantrums, depressions, etc. "Harmony" or "efficiency" literally destroys such people. For them, the Middle is a matter of life and death, since they are completely unfamiliar with it in their lives.

Moreover, the Buddha says that a person who is not in the body finds himself in the clutches of Mara¹. BV says that, observing the tension in the head, we are still in the body – but in the whole Suttanta there is not a single instruction of the Buddha that would indicate the need to ignore the body below the head, and the Buddha, we do not get tired of repeating this, used the language perfectly, and if it was necessary to say so, he would say so. But no, instead, the Buddha is constantly talking you about the need to be in your body and with all your body.

For a meditator with Painful Practice, such a "disembodied" approach is simply impossible and destructive. The mind of such people is entangled in the body, they cannot let it go directly. Breaking with the body for them is equivalent to sawing off their own hand.

But as for people with Pleasant Practice, such as, obviously, BV and DA, as well as those who allegedly get TWIM, there are two danger inclinations for them: this is an unwholesome habit of losing their body, and the lack of subtle sensations with which one can feel states of mind and phenomena of the mind (citta and dhamma). It is very difficult for such people, so to speak, to feel their mind with their body.

That is why Bhante, apparently, sincerely does not understand what the passion of food is. That is why after so many years of Vipassana, Bhante V suddenly discovered that if you lose your body, it is pleasant.

It should also be noted that people who are far from practice, who do not think about the liberation at all, also always live in separation from their bodies. BV say to his students: "Just drop your body", but all worldly people have already done this! They live out of their body all their lives. There is no need to teach them this. The habit of losing your body is a bad habit. Yes, indeed, bad habits can be pleasant, like smoking and alcohol. And it's nice to learn to let go of

¹ See MN 119, Kayagatasati Sutta

the body when you want, that is to "smoke" when you want. But... if we follow the Buddha's Dhamma, we will have to fully understand our bodies, instead of throwing it out of the game.¹

What the Buddha gave to all types of people in common is the four foundations of mindfulness, satipatthana. Even the arahants were in them². And this is the universal practice that leads to the liberation, being an integral part of the Noble Eightfold Path. In the description of satipatthana, there are practices of examining thirty-one body parts and corpses, and these painful practices were recommended by the Buddha to EVERYONE. But BV and DA seem to ignore it because it is not that harmonious or efficient.

BV and DA almost completely exclude satipatthana from their teachings, treating it as possible places of mindfulness, because otherwise they would have to give up their pleasant and innate habit of easily losing the body.

But by encouraging other people to let go of their body, they actually teach them not to be in reality, to ignore reality, to plunge more and more into ignorance, into the very ordinary habit of not being in the body, which all non-practicing people already have by default. This leads people of Pleasant Practice to the habit of falling into a subtle doze, and people of Painful Practice leads to an increasing imbalance. And this is a direct, visible error here and now. Thus TWIM unfortunately turns out to be a direct practice of cultivating ignorance, that is, something opposite to the Buddha's Dhamma.

Recall the words of the Buddha from MN119: **when someone "has not developed or cultivated mindfulness of the body, Mara finds a vulnerability and gets hold of them."** Thus, the practice of TWIM, which at first glance, like the bait of Mara, seems pleasant and attractive, actually destroys a person.

Now let's make a guess: Bhante V, being in the severe tradition of Vipassana by Mahasi Sayado (and he himself often talks about how harsh that school was), passed the first extreme – austerity. After that, he went to the opposite extreme namely into the pleasure and relaxation – and, since he is of the Pleasant Practice, and such people, again, have a tendency to lose their body almost completely up to the complete blackout, he clung to this experience and decided that Dhamma is pure pleasure, relaxation, smiling, joy, and so on. But again, this was the second extreme, namely the sensual pleasures. Yes, these pleasures are not as rude as food or sex, but why else relax up to a complete shutdown, except not to have a rest and fun.

The Buddha in his very first sermon teaches us that suffering must be fully understood³, that is, to comprehend directly the nature of pain, adjusted for the Middle – and this is not an impossible task. This is not some kind of mortal pain that needs to be understood. This pain is very subtle – see the example about the hair⁴.

¹ See SN 47.4, Sala Sutta.

² See SN 52.9, Ambapali Sutta

³ See SN 56.11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.

⁴ See SN 56.45, Vala Sutta.

But when a practitioner tries to know the First Noble Truth, the Suttavada teachers tell them: "You are doing the straight vipassana, just relax – The Third Noble Truth, nibbana, nibbana," something like "fake it until you make it". At the same time, they ignore the fact that the Buddha spoke about the destruction of craving, and this is especially true for the other 46 categories of students, for whom it is impossible to simply let go of craving by relaxation and smiling, because even relaxation and smiling contain a certain amount of craving, even if it is not a gross craving for sensual pleasures, but a craving for existence.

In the Suttas the Buddha constantly says – do not fall into carelessness¹, do not sleep, sleep is fruitless². BV and DA lead their students into letting go of everything, into immersion in a smile and in the belief that 6R works. But will this jellyfish-like movement of the mind-sensation in your head be able to lift a person with a tendency to fall into hell? And can a smile help a person of Painful Practice and with a tendency to alcoholism to literally break the physiological habit of drinking?

One more thing is that BV's activities also provoke a split in the Sangha. Moreover, he announced the split publicly, at a Buddhist Conference, that is, this kamma is not just mental. There are already websites, books, videos on Youtube, there are entire meditation centers, the main of which is the Dhammasukha Meditation Center in the USA. And everywhere, in every endeavor of the Suttavada, Bhante Vimalaramsi and of his associates, they

(1) explain Non-Dhamma as Dhamma, and (2) Dhamma as Non-Dhamma. They explain (3) Non-Vinaya as Vinaya, and (4) Vinaya as Non-Vinaya. (5) They explain what was not approved and pronounced by the Tathagata as what was approved and pronounced by him, and (6) what was approved and pronounced by the Tathagata as what was not approved and pronounced by him. (7) They explain what was not practiced by the Tathagata as what was practiced by him, and (8) what was practiced by the Tathagata as what was not practiced by him. (9) They explain what was not prescribed by the Tathagata as what was prescribed by them, and (10) what was prescribed by the Tathagata as what was not prescribed by them.

These points are from the Pathama Ananda Sutta, AN 10.39. It goes on to say:

"On these ... grounds they withdraw and go apart. They perform legal acts separately and recite the Patimokkha separately. It is in this way, Ananda, that there is schism in the Sangha."

"But, Bhante, when one causes schism in a harmonious Sangha, what does one generate?"

"One generates evil lasting for an eon, Ananda."

"But, Bhante, what is that evil lasting for an eon?"

"One is tormented in hell for an eon, Ananda."

A frightening prospect, isn't it.

Conclusion #1

¹ See AN 1.82, Pathama Pamadadivagga Sutta.

² See SN 35.235, Adittaparyaya Sutta.

The Buddha knew how to teach the Dhamma to people of all 48 types and formulated the Dhamma exactly so that it would be understandable to people of all categories. At the same time, he had perfect command of the language (this is one of the four analytical knowledge that the Tathagata possesses). So, every word in his sermons is in its place, exactly as it should be for the transmission of the Dhamma. BV and DA projected their experience onto the Suttas, corrected them to fit their experience and understanding, and now they teach everyone in this way, believing that this is the true Dhamma. At the same time, the TWIM method preached by them, despite its apparent beneficence, is directed in the opposite direction to the one where the Eightfold Path of the Buddha leads. Different categories of practitioners get different results in TWIM – from the ability to fall into a pleasant disconnection to complete disintegration of the psyche, but in any case, this result is not beneficial. We will tell you more about this below.

2. Doctrinal distortions of the Dhamma in the Suttavada

In the following sections, we will consider the profound differences that arise due to the abolition of only two concepts: "Middle" and "Right" laid down in the Noble Eightfold Path and absent in two paths – the "harmonious" one by Bhante V and the "effective" one by Delson Armstrong.

So, let us recall that the foundations of the Buddha's Teachings are:

- The Four Noble Truths are the fundamental Right View from which the Noble Eightfold Path begins.
- The Noble Eightfold Path – all aspects of which should be developed in order to realize the Four Noble Truths, true knowledge and liberation and nibbana (as the third NT).
- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are the practical implementation and study of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path from the perspective of practice in formal meditation and in life.

The key of our article will also include

- Faith in the three jewels, which begins with trust, at the level of reading, removing doubts, obtaining confirmed faith and achieving perfection in Faith at the level of Arahant, as well as
- Dependent Origination.

2.1. The Four Noble Truths

So on the one hand we have the Buddha – the first arahant, a fully Enlightened Being. He has a full understanding of the Dhamma, an understanding that there are at least 48 categories of personalities who can be helped, an understanding of the language and how the Dhamma should be taught. He formulated and presented the Dhamma to the world, was able to transmit it in all ways to all types of people¹ – murderers, courtesans, kings, representatives of other teachings, skeptics, those who were hostile, scientists, and, of course, ordinary people, often far from spiritual exercises. The Buddha perfectly mastered the miracle of instruction².

¹ See AN 10.21, Siha Sutta, point 5.

² See DN 33, Sangiti Sutta.

The Buddha perfectly mastered speech, both in meanings and in formulations – this is included in the four analytical knowledge peculiar to the Tathagata. The very fact that the Buddha formulated the Dhamma in this way¹ should have made BV and DA wonder if they were wrong.

And so, Bhante Vimalaramsi, who himself admits that he is not an arahant, says no. Not the Four Noble Truths, but the third – the third is main one. The first two you already see enough. But the Buddha says that the First Noble Truth must be known, that is, it is not at all obvious. BV says that the main thing is relaxation; relaxation is nibbana. According to the Suttas, nibbana is the destruction of craving, but according to BV, craving is tension (which is not in the Suttas), which means, says BV, it is relaxation that is nibbana.

Or Delson Armstrong, who, by the standards of the Suttavada, is considered an arahant, says that Mara is just a creature enjoying pleasures, whereas all arahants in Suttas say that Mara is the Evil, the Death, the Hunter, etc. DA says that Mara is not dangerous if you follow the Path, but in the Suttas we read that Mara clouded Ananda's mind (in DN16) or attacked one of the main disciple of the Buddha – arahant Mahamoggallana (see MN 50). DA says that the First Noble Truth does not imply that life is suffering, although the Buddha says it in plain text, in terms of the Dhamma, namely he says the 5 aggregates of clinging are suffering. To say so means that the whole life without gaps is suffering.

So, the Buddha, as it turned out, has two opponents. A non-arahant and a supposedly-arahant who disagree with the Buddha himself, because, again, the Buddha taught differently. For example, if the Buddha really taught as Bhante says about the Four Noble Truths, we would have only two noble truths, or they would be taught in a different order, say 3-1-2-4 or 3-4-1-2

But the Buddha taught the way he taught, and, no doubt, BV knows this. This means that he questions the words of the Buddha and shows his disbelief in the Dhamma, because the Buddha is the bodily embodiment of the Dhamma. Naturally, Bhante redirects his distrust to the Sangha, saying that there is no Sangha now, and the one that was distorted the Teaching. And so he fixed it.

But it is obvious that for 2500 years no one has changed the order or content of the Noble Truths. This kind of substitution would not have gone unnoticed. Thus, Bhante V, shifting his disbelief in the Buddha and the Dhamma to the Sangha, willy-nilly based his entire teaching on distrust of all Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.

Conclusion #2

If the Four Noble Truths had to be formulated differently – in different words, in a different order and/or in a different quantity, the Buddha would have done so. Thus, if BV and DA (or anyone else) reformulate the Four Noble Truths, this indicates their disbelief in the Three Jewels, which

¹ Not only does this Buddha formulate the Dhamma in this way, but according to the words of the Buddha himself, all buddhas of the past and future have formulated and will formulate the Dhamma in the same way.

means that the statement that the Suttavada is the true teaching of the Buddha turns out to be false.

2.2. "Middle" and "Right" vs "Harmonious" and "Effective"

Buddha, who perfectly mastered the language and methods of teaching the Dhamma to all beings capable of perceiving it, called the path of practice no other than the Middle, and the links of the Path the Right.

BV and DA, relying on personal experience, ignoring the 48 categories of those who can be taught, and not having faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, say: no, the path is not Middle, but Harmonious and Effective, and the links of the path are Harmonious and Effective, not Right.

You have already seen how important the Middle is for people with a Painful type of Practice, and that without the Middle, people with a Pleasant type of Practice are prone to carelessness, sleep and loss of body. Now we will try to show how, by changing just two words, you can create a false Dhamma and distort the entire Teaching.

Definitions from The Oxford Languages:

Middle – the point or position at an equal distance from the sides, edges or ends of something..

Right – true or correct as a fact.

2.2.1. "Middle" vs. "Harmonious" and "Effective"

Comparison of the concepts of "Right" and "Harmonious/Effective" (the correlate in Pali is the word "Samma") will be done later, and now we will see where we come if we replace the "Middle" with "Harmony" and "Efficiency". Here we will analyze this topic in detail.

There is no disagreement about the meaning of the Pali word itself here. The Pali word "majjha" is the middle. Examples of the use of these terms in the Canon are the Majjhe Sutta (AN 6.61) or Majjhima Nikaya. In the Majjhe Sutta, craving is compared to a seamstress who sews a person to Samsara, to suffering. The sutta says that in his way of getting rid of Craving, the Arahant passes between the "two ends" – contact and its occurrence – through the cessation of contact. What lies between the two ends is more of a middle ground, but hardly harmony or efficiency. The Majjhima Nikaya is a collection of suttas of medium length, but hardly a harmonious or even more effective collection of suttas.

We remind you again and again that the Buddha was a master in the language, and in the Pali language there are words describing both harmony and efficiency, for example:

tulā – balance, proportionality
ijjhana – successful
saṃsandamāna – harmonious
upakāraka – effective

pavattin – effective
samassara – what brings relief
yuganaddha – harmonious

So, there are plenty of words, but the Buddha used "majjha", which means "middle". Moreover, he constantly emphasizes this meaning, giving all sorts of analogies, for example, an analogy with the core of a tree.

2.2.1.1. What is Harmony?

Harmony is the coexistence of good and evil, it is self-organization, self-complacency and self-establishment of balance. Harmony is a position in which it is assumed that everything will calm down and settle down, that everything can be settled in peace and harmony.

Definition from The Cambridge Dictionary

Harmony – agreement of ideas, feelings, or actions, or a pleasing combination of different parts.

2.2.1.2. What is Efficiency?

Efficiency is the search for the shortest path with the maximum benefit. That is, in the context of the path, it could mean with a minimum of pain and effort to reach a state where there is no pain and no effort is needed.

Definition from The Cambridge Dictionary

Efficiency – the good use of time and energy in a way that does not waste any; the condition or fact of producing the results you want without waste, or a particular way in which this is done.

2.2.1.3. Comparison of concepts

Let's put these words in one row and consider them.

Harmony and Efficiency are far not equivalent to the Middle. The Middle is the central part of something. If the Middle Way lies through the rock and we need to follow it, then we must cut through the rock, even if it takes time and effort. Efficiency is getting around the rock. It is not an efficient thing to waste our time and energy to cut through the rock. We should change the direction. Actions with a rock from a position of Harmony are something like to sit down, accept this rock for what it is, smile and not move at all – we have a rock in front of us. Maybe the decision to bypass the rock also fits into a harmonious strategy, but definitely not to cut through it in a dust, sweat and blood. Because this is not a harmony, but a battle.

The Middle in the definition of the Buddha from SN 56.11, from his first sermon, is the path between indulgence of sensual desires and asceticism.

Harmony implies either moderation in sensual desires and austerity, or it is something subjective: for someone to drink a glass of vodka instead of two is austerity, and for someone to drink some wine at dinner is harmony, it is not even considered a sensual pleasure and violation of the prescription.

Efficiency is also not suitable, because sometimes it is really more effective, along the path of least resistance, to succumb to sensual pleasures, and sometimes it would be nice to push in asceticism – why? Because it's effective.

Recall that there is no doubt that the meaning of the word *majjha* is exactly "the middle". Even BV and DA must not be doubt in it. Therefore, for what needs they replace this word can be understood unambiguously – in order to adjust the verbal formulation of Dhamma to their understanding of it.

The fact is that if we leave the word "middle", then their teaching about total relaxation turns out to be extreme. Their teaching that life is beautiful turns out to be extreme; their teaching that you need to smile at everything turns out to be extreme; their teaching that there is no need to hurry anywhere turns out to be extreme; their teaching that "you don't have to try too hard" (a constant refrain at their retreats) turns out to be extreme; the fact that they force the participants of the retreats to sit motionless in meditation for many hours turns out to be extreme.

BV actually correctly and accurately chose the word to describe his experience of relaxation, and this is his right, if not for one "but": he attributes this attribute not to his personal experience, but to the Dhamma. Thus, he absolutizes his personal experience and extends it to all people, and also contradicts what the Buddha says, that is, distorts the Dhamma.

This word – "The Middle" – is important, you can also appreciate its importance by remembering that in addition to pleasant practice there is painful. And if a Pleasant Practice is devoid of the Middle, it may be either slightly unpleasant, or you will fall into a dream. But if a Painful Practice is middleless, then it will be either stress from pain, or a nervous breakdown, or a meditation bad trip, or a psychotic state, or a loss of faith in oneself and complete abandonment of practice, or a loss of faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, since a person will believe that by practicing the BV technique, he practiced the Dhamma. And this is a real split in the Sangha, because if a person who does not have faith does not receive it, and if he who has faith loses faith, this will not lead to growth, will not lead to aspiration, will not lead to success the most vulnerable part of the Sangha. This is the category of people who are looking for real liberation, but their aspiration is based on faith. According to the Suttas, the deepest hell awaits the one who created the split in the Sangha¹.

Within this section, we hope we show you that the word *majjha* in no way can be translated differently or replaced by either the word "Harmonious" or the word "Effective".

Conclusion #3

If it were necessary to call the Path Harmonious or Effective, the Buddha would have done so, instead of calling the Path Middle. Harmony and Efficiency may be safe in the short term (within one life) for practitioners with Pleasant Practice and an upward vector, but for practitioners with

¹ See AN 10.39, Pathama Ananda Sutta.

Painful Practice and individuals with a downward vector, the exclusion of the Middle is equivalent to signing a death sentence, at least in the spiritual life within this life.

2.2.2. "Right" vs "Effective" and "Harmonious"

Bhante Vimalaramsi considers the word Right an erroneous translation of the Pali term *samma*. He says that since this variant was introduced by the Jesuit Christians, who were the first European translators of Buddhist texts, it carries the original Christian division into good and evil, the only true and everything else (erroneous, sinful) and so on. In BV's opinion, this introduces excessive confrontationality into the Buddhist doctrine.

Therefore, he introduced a new version of the translation of the word "samma" – "harmonious". This option, in his opinion, more accurately conveys the meaning that was put by the Buddha. Following BV, his student, Delson Armstrong, also took up creativity in this area, offering his own version of the translation, namely "effective". As a result, by deleting the term "Right" from the foundation of the Noble Eightfold Path, BV and DA made another distortion of Dhamma.

As we have already seen, the Buddha clearly knew both the word "harmony" and the word "effective", and he would certainly have applied any of these words to such important doctrines as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path if it was necessary and more correct than "middle" or "right". Even if these words did not exist in nature, the Buddha would have created them, after which he would have designated their meaning. Or he would redefine existing words, giving them a new meaning and definition. But the Buddha used exactly the word *samma*, as well as *majjha*, in relation to the Path of Its aspects.

So, *samma*. Let's consider this term, which is no less important than *majjha*. How most translators translate this term and how do this BV and DA:

The author of the translation	The translation of the word <i>samma</i>
The generally accepted translation	Right, correct, righteous, proper
Bhante Vimalaramsi	Harmonious
Delson Armstrong	Effective

In addition to the steps of the path, the word *samma* is used in the designation of the Buddha – Sammasambuddha – The Properly Perfectly Awakened One. In addition, this word is also used in relation to some people – for example, this is how the Buddha called the Ghatikara in the Ghatikara Sutta - "samma Ghatikara".

Let's try "effective" and "harmonious" to the Buddha.

According to the Suttas:

The Properly Perfectly Awakened One – according to the points from CH 56.11 – is the one who has realized all four Noble Truths in three turns, that is, developed the Middle Path to the end,

consisting of Right Views ... Right Concentration, and as a result came to the Right Knowledge and Right Liberation. This is how it looks if we take the concept of "right" as the translation of the word "samma".

By Bhante Vimalarasi:

We get "harmoniously perfectly awakened". The question arises: if the Buddha is "inharmoniously" perfectly awakened, does it not count?

How did the Buddha realize the Liberation? He recalled a huge number of his past lives and many cycles of the existence of the Universe¹. In the Jatakas, it is said that he remembered how in past lives his nose, ears, hands were cut off, and he was killed many times, how he himself killed, how he was born an animal – and the Buddha never says about the animal worlds in the Suttas that it is at least a pleasant world. Moreover, the Buddha constantly puts the animal world even lower than the world of suffering spirits.

The Buddha also saw where the creatures are being dragged by kamma – he saw the lowest hells, and how incredibly long it takes to get out of there, and you can end up in them just because of a careless thought². He saw the gods falling straight from the bliss of the heavenly worlds into hell³.

He saw how people eat their own beloved children in order to survive⁴, that ignorance has no conceivable beginning. He saw that what is the most terrible thing imaginable has already happened to us⁵, and even the most beautiful has also happened⁶, and consequently, countless wrong, false liberations⁷ have already happened to us. We launched religions, wrong Dhammas, created evil that lasted a kappa, leading people in the wrong direction, even to rebirth in the higher worlds of Samsara, but not to exit it. The only thing that did not happen to us was the Right Liberation. That's why we're here now.

It is impossible to call what the Buddha saw a harmony and harmonious liberation if you follow the generally accepted understanding of the term "harmony". What the Buddha experienced is a complete disappointment in life as a phenomenon, imagine if you had the opportunity to simply rewind on an accelerated display all the pain and tears of at least this life of yours – you would give up this experience. Why? Because it's inharmonious. The Buddha remembered as much pain as no being has remembered and will not remember, even those who can become arahants. Only buddhas remember so much suffering. The sutta about tears⁸ is the truth that the Buddha remembered and saw, and this is not his personal truth, it concerns all beings including BV, who also cried oceans of tears in past lives. But BV believes in Buddhist materialism and

¹ See SN 15.7, Savaka Sutta.

² See SN 6.10, Dutiya Kokalika Sutta

³ See AN 4.125, Pathama Metta Sutta.

⁴ See SN 12.63, Puttamamsa Sutta.

⁵ See SN 15.11, Duggata Sutta.

⁶ See SN 15.12, Sukhita Sutta.

⁷ See MN 117, Mahacattarika Sutta.

⁸ See SN 15.3, Assu Sutta.

apparently considers the hellish and heavenly worlds a fairy tale, although he says that he sees devas or at least believes in them. But if he believed in the hells, he would be afraid of creating a split and distorting the Dhamma.

By Delson Armstrong:

The same goes for "efficiency": the Buddha here is "effectively perfectly awakened." The Buddha did not follow the path of least resistance. The highest efficiency is how DA himself became a "suttavada-arahant". Just meditate for one week or another, learn to fall into a dreamless sleep and to go by the minute into what is considered Jhanas in the Suttavada, and it's ready to remember a few past lives (and are these really past lives?), more a curiosity and for admiration. That is, it is really an effective release from pain without pain or with a minimum of it. The Buddha was not an arahant when he looked at past lives, he was not an arahant when he saw how the actions of beings dragged them into terrible births for nightmarish periods of time.

It would be effective not to see any of this, but simply to be released without pain and regret. shake off, smile and move on, but this cannot lead to the degree of frustration that is needed for complete Liberation from Craving. Efficiency, on the other hand, contains a benefit – the benefit of preserving the view of the "I", and craving – at least, existence and non-existence.

I hope the above arguments will be sufficient to at least admit the possibility that the concepts of right and wrong are not fiction, and that the Buddha really taught about the distinction between right and wrong, black and white¹.

The desire of both teachers to avoid these concepts from a formal point of view is completely unjustified. Extremes often appear in the Suttas – good and bad, dark and light, pain and pleasure, ignorance and wisdom. As you have seen, BV and DA are also not averse to going to extremes. Why are they trying to smooth out the difference between right and wrong? And then why don't they smooth out everything else? "Inharmonious" birth in hell. An "effective" birth in paradise. The "sort of" dark quality of anger and the "sort of" light quality of awareness. "Conditional pain" from death "Conditional pleasure" from the cessation of death. "Kind of like" ignorance, "kind of like" not giving out of samsara, and "kind of like" true knowledge, "kind of like" giving out beyond rebirth.

To summarize, I would like to give an example from the MN 117 sutta. In it, the Buddha does not talk about views that are "effective" or "ineffective", "harmonious" or "inharmonious". The Buddha saw millions of Paths that millions of prophets and founders of the teachings proclaimed to be true, but at the same time they were wrong Paths based on the wrong view ... wrong concentration, leading to wrong knowledge and wrong liberation.

¹ See DN 28, Sampadaniya Sutta: "And so, Sir, the Blessed One instructed me in the truth – the most excellent, the most sublime, reminiscent of black and white".

Similarly, harmonious views... harmonious concentration of the mind leads to harmonious knowledge and harmonious liberation. Not right, but harmonious. Which is essentially just a kind of wrong way.

Actually, the fact that Delson if he is an arahant, then he is a "harmonious" arahant is beyond doubt. How else can it be explained that the "arahant" does not understand even the First Noble Truth, which is understood by anyone, let's repeat any person with Painful Practice, that is, not even a Noble Person or a Disciple at the very beginning of the Path.

A fully liberated and knowledgeable Buddha would not call the views leading to hell "ineffective" or "inharmonious". Why these euphemisms, when even an unenlightened person understands that it is wrong – very, to put it mildly, undesirable - to end up in hell. What does efficiency and harmony have to do with it? Wrong views lead to hell. If the hells and paradises were just "tricks" to push people to take the Path of harmony and or efficiency, then rest assured the Buddha would have said so. There is no hell, there is no heaven, it's not about them, it's just nice to become an arahant. But Buddha doesn't say that, because he saw a danger that BV doesn't see being smiling at squirrels and talking to animals, and thinking that he is saved, and that pleasant things don't capture him. And if there is such a danger, then only those who do not believe in hell can afford to teach a person to sit and wait for a harmonious and effective "falling asleep" in a smile and light laughter.

BV and DA, considering themselves anagami and arahant, respectively, and distributing the titles of Noble Personalities to other people, teach others, in fact, idleness. This would be evil in itself, according to the Teachings of the Buddha, but doubly, ten times more evil is that they pass this path off as the Buddha's Dhamma.

Conclusion #4

There is right and wrong according to Dhamma. The Buddha never smoothed the corners, because he saw the real picture of the world, and not the vanilla sky of Pleasant Practice. The enlightenment of the Buddha was exactly right, it was very "inharmonious" and very "ineffective" as it is understood in the Suttavada.

2.2.3. "Right", "Harmonious" and "Effective" in relation to the Noble Eightfold Path

Let us now consider all aspects of the Noble Eightfold Path according to the Suttas and according to Bhante Vimalaramsi and Delson Armstrong.

First, the definitions from the Suttas (DN 22).

2.2.3.1. The Noble Eightfold Path according to the Suttas

Name by Suttas	Definition by Suttas*	Explanation
The Right View	Knowledge of suffering, knowledge of the origin of suffering, knowledge of the cessation of suffering. Knowledge of the path of practice leading to the cessation of suffering.	These Are The Four Noble Truths. Since the Noble Eightfold Path is the Fourth Noble Truth, and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are the seventh aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path, these elements form a cyclic structure. If you direct your attention to one of the elements, then all the others automatically become relevant too. This is clearly seen in the diagram below.
The Right Intention	Determination to renounce, to be free from evil, to do no harm.	Intention, determination – well characterized by walking, raising hands or cycling. For example, when you walk – you have the intention to walk. When you ride a bike – the same thing. You don't need to keep an image, telling yourself "I'm walking, I'm walking" or "driving, driving" to walk or to drive. Intention is a manifestation of mental formation, much more subtle than speech formation, and much faster than visualization.
The Right Speech	Abstaining from lying, from divisive speech, from insulting speech, and from empty chatter.	Speech is the verbal communication that creatures use. Words that the practitioner speaks to himself or to others. Nonverbal "communication" enters into the right view and the right intention. That is, these are the motives and prerequisites that should be behind speech, or the sources from which speech should be born. This factor is precisely the "realization" of

		speech actions that are born from mental actions.
The Right Action or Conduct	Abstaining from killing, abstaining from stealing, abstaining from sexual misconduct.	<p>These are bodily actions that are born from mental actions and can be fueled by speech. These actions are the implementation of all the previous aspects of the path into life. Because having the right views, intentions and speech, it is impossible to kill, steal or commit offenses in sensual pleasures.</p> <p>Celibacy is a requirement for monks and laypeople who observe the 8 precepts.</p>
The Right Livelihood	A noble disciple, leaving an unfair lifestyle, leads his life in accordance with the right way of life.	It is talking about abandoning an unrighteous lifestyle, including a way of earning a living, which affects the peace of mind.
The Right Effort	<p>A monk arouses his will, puts forth effort, generates energy, exerts his mind, and strives to prevent the the arising of evil and unwholesome mental states that have not yet arisen.</p> <p>He arouses his will ... and strives to eliminate evil and unwholesome mental states that have already arisen.</p> <p>He arouses his will ... and strives to generate wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen.</p> <p>He arouses his will, puts forth effort, generates energy, exerts his mind, and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have already arisen, to keep them free of delusion, to develop, increase, cultivate, and perfect them.</p>	<p>Pay attention to the words that describe the motivation of the practitioner. This is perseverance, effort and determination.</p> <p>We will talk about the Right Effort and about the lack of it in the 6R's method separately in the chapter on practice.</p>
The Right Mindfulness	<p>The monk abides observing the body as the body, ardently, consciously and with mindfulness, having managed to overcome greed and grief in this world;</p> <p>He abides observing feelings as feelings, ardently, consciously and with mindfulness, having managed to overcome greed and grief in this world;</p>	Here the Buddha clearly says that the Right Mindfulness is nothing but the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. At the same time, all four Foundations are observed carefully, decisively, diligently.

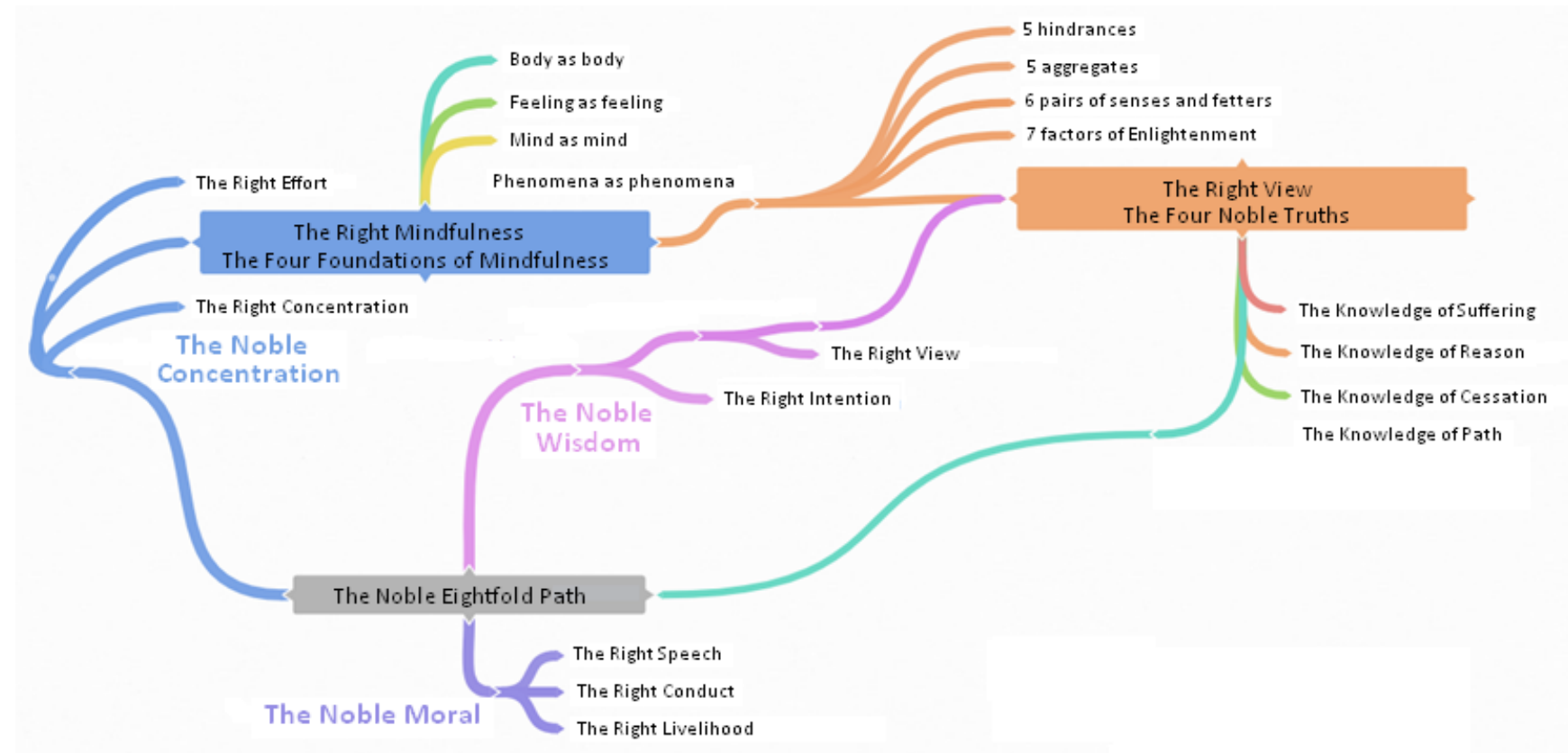
	<p>He abides observing the mind as the mind, ardently, consciously and with mindfulness, having managed to overcome greed and grief in this world;</p> <p>He abides observing the qualities of the mind (dhamma) as the qualities of the mind, ardently, consciously and with mindfulness, having managed to overcome greed and grief in this world.</p>	
The Right Concentration	<p>At the same time, a monk - completely detached from sensuality (kama), detached from non-artistic qualities (akusalah-dhamma) - enters and remains in the first jhana: delight (piti) and pleasure (sukha), born of detachment, accompanied by reasoning (vitakka) and study (vichara).</p> <p>With the cessation of reasoning and study, he enters and remains in the second jhana: delight and pleasure born of concentration (samadhi-jam), unification of consciousness (cetaso ekodibhavam), free from reasoning and study, inner confidence (ajhattam-sampasadanam).</p> <p>With the extinction of delight (piti), he remains in serene observation (upekha), with mindfulness (sati) and awareness (sampajannya); and experiences physical pleasure (sukha). He enters and remains in the third jhana, and the noble ones say of him: "The one who serenely observes and recognizes lives in pleasure."</p> <p>With the abandonment of pleasure and suffering— just as joy and sorrow disappeared before that, he enters and remains in the fourth jhana: mindfulness purified by serene observation (upekha-sati-parisuddhi), neither pleasure nor suffering (adukkham-asukha)</p>	<p>This is Four Rupa Jhana. Four meditative concentrations that correspond to the divine worlds from the world of the creator god – Brahma and above. With the preservation of the form – the thin body.</p> <p>There will also be a separate chapter about Jhanas in the section dedicated to practice.</p>

* Definitions are taken from the Sutta DN 22, Mahasatipatthana Sutta.

There can be no doubt about the above definitions, since this is the very essence of the teaching formulated in the Suttas many times, and if a person does not agree with these formulations, he or she is simply a representative of another teaching. It makes no sense to consider and call yourself a Buddhist, while following and teaching something else.

Based on the formulations from the Suttas, we get the following. The diagram below shows the relationship between Understanding – the Four Noble Truths, the Path – the Noble Eightfold Path and Practice – the Four Foundations of Mindfulness in the Buddha's Dhamma.

If we combine all the elements of the Noble Eightfold Path in the form of a diagram, we will get something like this picture:



Here you can see that all parts of the teaching contain each other, it is impossible to think about a separate part of the Teaching, they are all one and inseparable. Practice is impossible without a goal and a path, a path without a goal and practice, a goal without practice and a path. All parts are perfectly combined, do not contradict each other, complement each other, support and reveal each other.

- The Four Noble Truths – The Right Views — The First Aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path, the Fourth Foundations of Mindfulness "Phenomena of the Mind as the Phenomena of the Mind" – section Four Noble Truths – are synonyms.
- The Middle Path, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Fourth Noble Truth, the Fourth Foundations of Mindfulness – "The Phenomena of the Mind in the Phenomena of the Mind" – section Four Good Truths – The Fourth Noble Truth are also synonyms.
- The Four Foundations of Mindfulness – The Right Mindfulness — The Seventh Aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path are also synonyms.

2.2.3.2. The Harmonious Path by Bhante Vimalaramsi

Name by Suttas	Name by BV	Definition by BV*	Comparison with Suttas
The Right View	Harmonious Perspective	It is talking about the perspective of everything that arises as being an impersonal process (anatta) to be observed. ... Why does suffering occur? Because of the unharmonious things to be, the way "I want" them to be, when "I want them this way!" This "I", "Me", "Mine" concept or perspective (atta) is the very problem to be seen, let go of, and relaxed. This is the "First Noble Truth, Suffering" or being out of harmony with our perspective of the present moment.	<p>The Right Views contain the Four Noble Truths, which, in turn, contain the Noble Eightfold Path. But the Right View is not a reaction to what is happening, but a direct vision of reality.</p> <p>The vision of anatta, that is, impersonality (which is referred to in the definition of BV) without the Four Noble Truths as they are formulated by the Buddha, is the vision of thoughts about anatta but not the reality. You can see anatta in the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness almost immediately, but the depth of the Four Noble Truths is not seen at it. You don't see the Suffering this way and therefore you are not able to do anything else – to eliminate the Cause, to realize the Cessation and to develop the Path.</p> <p>Even ordinary secular psychology easily agrees with the postulate that a person is a set of phenomena and perceptions in which there is no "I". Psychology will easily agree that there is no need to take what is happening personally, etc. But this does not make psychology a path to liberation. We will talk about anatta later. For now, it will be enough to note the absence of Four Noble Truths in the "harmonic view" of BV, as opposed to the Right View. Thus, the connection between the path and the goal of the path is broken.</p> <p>In this definition, BV actually formulated the manifesto of a person going "from light to light", inclined to Pleasant Practice, and who needs to be</p>

			<p>taught with gentle.</p> <p>The emphasis is on anatta, but at the same time there is not a word about anatta in the definition of the Right Views given by the Buddha himself. Moreover, it does not appear even in the detailed description of the Right Views given by Sariputta in Sammaditthi Sutta (MN 9).</p> <p>As follows from the sutta MN 117, from wrong views, the wrong path and wrong knowledge and liberation are born. Therefore, we could stop after this link, since the Harmonious Perspective by BV is a wrong view, but nevertheless, we will bring this work to the end and analyze every aspect of the path in the formulation of BV.</p>
The Right Intention	Harmonious Imaging	<p>This is consciously replacing an unwholesome image (Wrong Thought) such as fear, anxiety, depression, sadness etc. that is currently present. Then one substitutes that unwholesome image with a wholesome image like happiness, joy, calmness, peace, total acceptance or any other uplifting image that one can think of. Now one is purposefully feeling that wholesome, uplifting image.</p>	<p>1. The formation of an image as such does not mean the formation of an intention, in any case, other than directed at the formation of this image itself. But nothing is said about the intention here.</p> <p>2. The definition from the Suttas does not say anything about a smile and joy, that is, this "imaging" is not directed at what the Buddha was talking about.</p> <p>3. Without the appropriate intention, any imaging will not work, and, again, not a word is said about the intention here, so even the visualization of happiness will not work in the end.</p> <p>Thus, in the formulation of the Harmonious Imaging by BV, we can see how the wrong path is born from the wrong view.</p>

The Right Speech	Harmonious Communication	This has to do with gentle communication with ourselves (internal dialogue) as well as with other people too. This helps us to easily let go of and relax into any type of disturbing thoughts, feelings, or emotions that can pull mind's attention away from the meditation object (which for practical purposes we can say is breath, relaxing and smiling or metta, relaxing and smiling).	Communication with oneself is a mental action, mental communication. The Buddha described mental communication in the first two paragraphs, and in the third paragraph, the Buddha is talking about speech actions, about verbal communication. A light laugh and a smile is really a way of communicating, but the Right Speech is not needed for this. The Noble Path is a way out of Samsara, not a format of communication, etiquette or a way to harmonize interactions with oneself and the world (harmonization with Samsara). In the suttas there is a direct recommendation of the Buddha – either talk about the Dhamma or not to talk at all. If it is a smile, it is only connected with the Dhamma, and laughter when teeth are visible is childish. ¹ . We see that the wrong path, coming from the wrong premises, continues to grow, completely obscuring the real Path of the Buddha.
The Right Action or Conduct	Harmonious Movement	This is seeing the movements of how mind's attention goes from one thing to another.	<p>The Right Mindfulness in texts is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. for this, there is a separate aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path (the seventh), whereas in the Right Action, bodily actions that have the greatest karmic severity are described. In this paragraph, the Buddha contains a warning that such actions must be abandoned.</p> <p>If you take the definition of BV and do not know the original definition, then this is the road to hell even for a gentle and kind person, since he will not know about offenses in the field of sensual pleasures.</p> <p>Again, there are no smiles, 6R and the direction of the mind anywhere in determining the Right Actions.</p> <p>BV mixes effort, mindfulness, intention, and views into one factor, and, of course, even formulating them incorrectly. These are the wrong factors of the wrong path, because they stem from the view of anatta, not the Four Noble Truths.</p> <p>And if we talk about the source, then they stem from the BV, who thought that the essence of Buda's teachings was to see anatta (otherwise he would not have put anatta as the first link of his Harmonious Path). But the Buddha could not put the Right Path at the head of the corner, because seeing anatta is a subjective thing. By itself,</p>

¹ See AN 3.107, Runna Sutta.

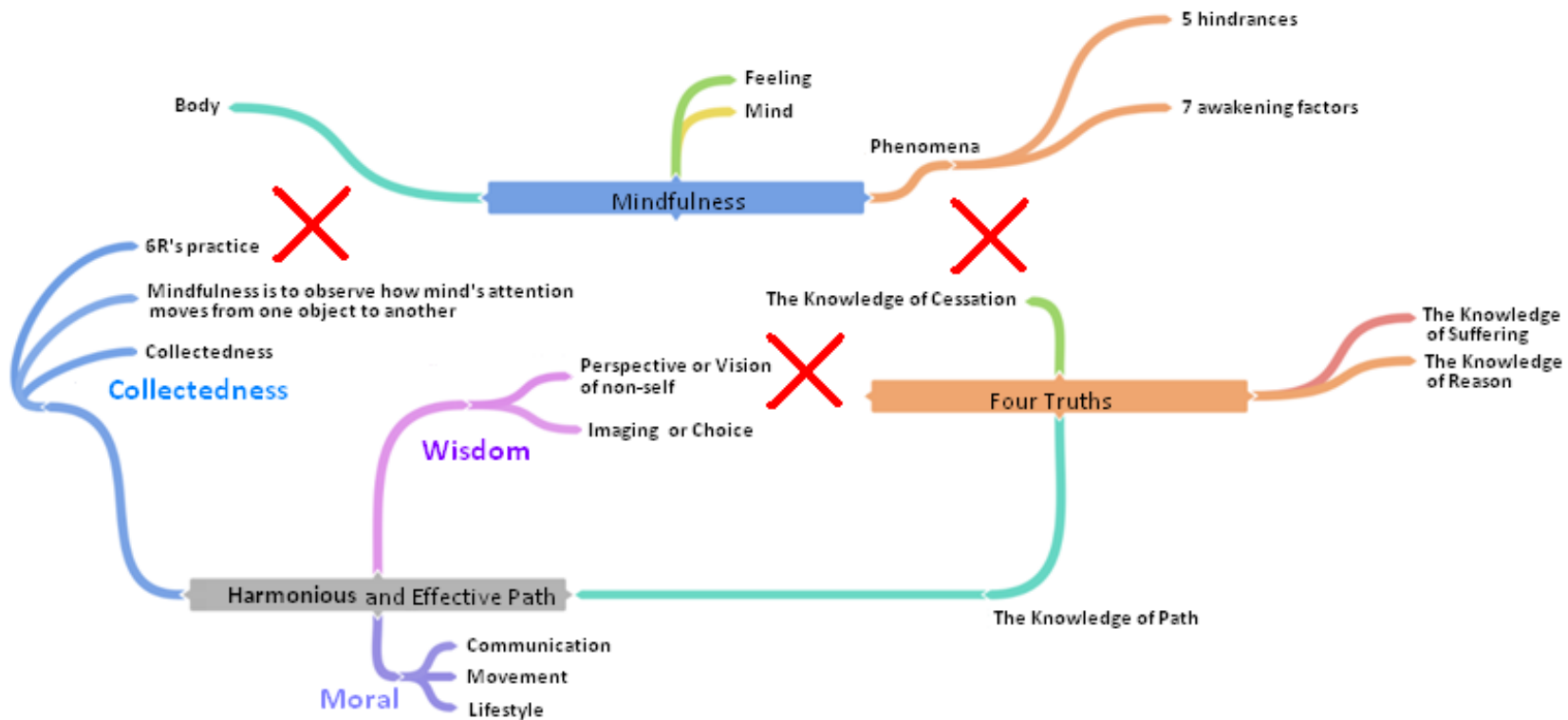
			<p>this does not lead to liberation from craving. For someone, anatta will be to see that thoughts are impersonal, or intentions (what is before thoughts), or the body. Someone will convince himself that everything is impersonal, and say that he sees anatta, and so on.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the Four Noble Truths, with an emphasis on full comprehension and the complete destruction of craving, are a specific goal with a specific description of the result.</p>
The Right Livelihood	Harmonious Life Style	<p>Having a Harmonious Lifestyle means that we learn to carry the meditation with us all the time, in daily activities. Having a Harmonious Lifestyle is having an uplifted mind that is smiling, joyful, alert and free from unwholesome thoughts, or feelings.</p>	<p>The meaning of the Right Livelihood is about how not to earn yourself a bodily karma that leads to rebirth in hell and in the animal worlds, because of an unfair lifestyle. If we follow this point of the Path, our body is calm enough so that we have the opportunity to develop the Path as much as possible.</p> <p>BV actually turns the Dhamma from a Path to Salvation into a sort of psychotherapy. At this point, instead of an honest lifestyle that gives peace of mind, we get laughter and a smile.</p> <p>Laughter and a smile are a worry, even if they are soft. You can chit with paying taxes and steal from the state – and laugh gently at it, however such a trifle can unsettle a practitioner for months.</p>
The Right Effort	Harmonious Practice	<p>4 steps:</p> <p>1] recognize that the mind is caught by some unhealthy feeling or thought;</p> <p>2] let go of this unwholesome feeling/thought, apply relaxation, smile and laugh;</p> <p>3] direct this lighter smiling mind's attention back to a wholesome object (metta);</p> <p>4] maintaining (with the help of metta) a smile and laughter, as</p>	<p>The Suttas say that we should apply the Right Effort not only at the moment when the mind is caught, but CONSTANTLY. It is also obvious that in the Right Effort, the Buddha calls for working on the elimination of pollution very, so to speak, "personally" and "intensely" – with effort and zeal. And again – not a word about a smile.</p> <p>We will consider this factor in more detail in the chapter dedicated to the consideration of the 6R's method.</p> <p>Metta is a medicine that the Buddha clearly prescribed against ill-will. The definition of BV is useless when working with sensual pleasures, and if only metta is included in the definition of this point of the Path, but the practices of contemplating the disgusting are not included, this means that such a practice, if effective, will only be against ill-will. Against an attractive, beautiful, alluring object, it will be useless.</p>

		<p>well as a non-personal view of events.</p> <p>These steps are codified as method 6R's: Recognize, Release, Relax, Re-Smile, Return, Repeat.</p>	
The Right Mindfulness	Harmonious Observation	<p>Harmonious Observation means: "To remember to recognize any distraction that pulls one's attention away from their meditation object, in the present moment". This means to remember to observe whatever arises in the present moment, let it be and see the impersonal nature in all of these phenomena (Harmonious Perspective – Right View). This is remembering to clearly observe how mind's attention moves (Harmonious Movement) from one thing to another, then remembering to let go and let the Harmonious Practice (Right Effort) do its work.</p>	<p>In this definition there is no body, no feelings, no objects of the mind. There are only 3rd foundation of mindfulness, which contradicts the definition given by the Buddha. Moreover, the first foundation – the body – is consciously discarded during the practice of TWIM. However, BV says that this is not so – after all, the head remains, and it is also the body. But this contradicts the Suttas, according to which kayo is exactly the whole physical body. BV's Four Foundations of Mindfulness appear to be "hanging in the air": according to his instructions, they are just four areas in which our attention wanders, and not what should be developed (and the Buddha says it must be).</p> <p>It is also impossible not to say here about the "branded" definition of awareness from BV. He says mindfulness is remembering to watch the mind move from object to object. This definition contradicts the suttas – but it does not contradict the views of the BV about the Path as something "harmonious"..</p> <p>What is the problem with this definition? Let's give an example: the mind is a pigeon that wanders here and there. When we are absorbed and involved in ideas and the mind, we become this pigeon. Being a pigeon is an unhealthy state.</p> <p>BV teaches: "Don't be a pigeon. Watch the pigeon." That is, separate yourself and look at the pigeon. This is really a "harmonious" mindfulness that comes from a wrong view of anatta.</p> <p>How would the Buddha propose to work with the pigeon in the metaphor, according to the definition of the Right Mindfulness?</p> <p>The definition of the Right Mindfulness according to the Buddha states that it is necessary to divide the experience into 4 bases – on the body,</p>

			<p>on the feeling, on the state of mind and on the phenomena of the mind.</p> <p>That is, according to this definition:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. we keep awareness on our body, 2. we track the sensations arising from external factors and tracking the pigeon 3. we track the state of mind – the mood of the pigeon 4. and we track and correctly categorize the phenomena of the mind. In the key of our metaphor, this means to monitor the behavior and reactions of the pigeon, referring its reactions and manifestations to certain categories within certain classification systems: 5 hindrances, 5 aggregates, etc.
The Right Concentration	Harmonious Collectedness	<p>This is the achievement of a level of concentration /easy concentration, or a united mind through maintaining the ease of practice.</p> <p>The mind is alert, calm and collected – able to be completely in the moment without distractions and efforts.</p> <p>This way we smile and laugh more easily in everyday life!</p>	<p>Easy concentration does not lead to the remembering of past lives, does not lead to the comprehension of suffering and other Noble Truths, does not even lead to the purification of the mind.</p> <p>The jhanas will be discussed below. But we should note right away that TWIM-jhanas are a phenomenon that contradicts the Suttas and has nothing to do with the jhanas described in the Suttas. We mentioned this in passing in the theses.</p>

* Definitions are taken from retreat booklets and from the article <https://library.dhammasukha.org/the-8-fold-path-in-practical-terms.html> by Bhante Vimalaramsi.

So, the path described by Bhante Vimalaramsi is exactly the "harmonious" path, where there is anatta from the Teachings of the Buddha, and it does not belong to the Right Views, but for some reason it has become a Harmonious View according to BV. The scheme of such a path will look something like this. Approximately, because due to the confusion of formulations, it is difficult to make a specific division, and schematically depicting confusion is a hopeless task.



It can be seen that Practice, Path and Understanding are not interconnected. Noble Truths in their “branded” “harmonious” order: the third is the main one, because these are nirodha and nibbana, and the first and second are not important, because we apply 6R to them. In addition to the third truth, the fourth, Harmonious Path is important.

There is a one-way connection between the Four Noble Truths and the Harmonious Path, but the cycle is broken. Therefore, if the practitioner was not faced with the task of letting go of everything, including the path and the goal, he would have to always keep in mind all aspects of the BV teaching. In fact, this path is perfect for letting go of everything, because it is even difficult to adopt it as a path due to the blurriness of the formulations, and the actual practice – because in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, mindfulness

of breathing is replaced by metta with radiance in 6 sides. Such radiance, as it is taught in the Suttavada, in itself creates blurriness, relaxation, and as a result - a state familiar to any person - falling asleep with a smile.

We hope that from the above it became quite obvious to the reader that the Harmonious Path from BV is not the Right Path of the Buddha. Even by one kind of "patchwork", torn scheme, you can understand that this is not the work of an enlightened person, especially if you keep in mind the original scheme of the Path, Practice and Understanding of the Dhamma from the Suttas.

2.2.3.3. The Effective Path by Delson Armstrong

Name by Suttas	Name by DA	Definition by DA*	Comparison with Suttas
The Right View	Effective Vision	<p>Effective Vision is the complete and thorough knowledge of the four noble truths – that is:</p> <p>There is suffering in life (not: life is suffering)</p> <p>The cause of suffering – The projections of craving, being and ignorance</p> <p>The cessation of suffering – The destruction of the projections</p> <p>The path leading to cessation – The eightfold path of the noble ones</p> <p>With correct understanding and experience of this wisdom, you have rooted out the causes and conditions for rebirth and attain the unshakeable release of mind.</p>	<p>Despite the fact that the first point of the Path according to DA contains Four Noble Truths, you should not relax: These are not the Noble Truths that the Buddha spoke about.</p> <p>1. There is suffering in life (not: "life is suffering" – this is emphasized specifically) is the first part of the formulation, the First Noble Truth. It is not at all clear how the words of the Buddha fit into this formulation that all five aggregates of clinging are suffering¹. The five aggregates of clinging are all personal experience, completely and without gaps, that is, in fact, our whole life. In other words, the Buddha says that life is suffering, but DA obviously does not agree with him. According to SN 56.30, he who understands the First Noble Truth understands all Noble Truths. Obviously, if someone does not understand the First Noble Truth, they do not understand them at all.</p> <p>There is another point. By definition, an arahant is one who has fully understood the Noble Truths. The question arises – how can DA be called an arahant?</p> <p>2. The cause of suffering – The projections of craving, being and ignorance – this is not in the definition of the Four Noble Truths and in general in the Suttas. First, projections can be defined as views. But the Buddha nowhere speaks of the</p>

¹ See for example suttas DN 22, Mahasatipatthana Sutta, or SN 26.10, Khandha Sutta.

			<p>Second Noble Truth as a view. This is exactly craving. And what DA implies is some very late derivative of ignorance. It is something that has reflected and re-reflected from the craving of existence and ignorance.</p> <p>3. The cessation of suffering – The destruction of the projections. If projections are destroyed, the "projection mechanism" itself is obviously not destroyed. The cessation of projections is not the cessation of existence in the sense of craving for existence.</p> <p>4. The path leading to cessation – the eightfold path of the noble ones. Well, at least, DA did not throw away the connection between views and an effective way.</p> <p>Again, in fact, it would be possible to end here, since the view itself is wrong, since it is fundamentally different from what the Buddha says. Accordingly, the path that grows out of it cannot be right. Nevertheless, as last time, we will finish our work.</p> <p>So, DA says: "There is suffering, but not always. It is necessary to remove the projections of craving."</p> <p>The Buddha says: "There is suffering at any moment of samsaric existence, and it is necessary to destroy the craving itself in order to put an end to suffering forever."</p>
The Right Intention	Effective Choice	<p>Effective Choice (Sammā Saṅkappa) and Effective Application (Sammā Vāyāma)</p> <p>Effective choice is the choice to be in a wholesome state, while effective application is the process in which mind roots out unwholesome states, brings to fruition wholesome states and maintains them. This will be shown through the process of what is known as the 6R's, while using the</p>	<p>1) Here DA, as well as BV earlier, demonstrates a lack of understanding of the subtleties of the phenomenon of intention. He talks about "choice".</p> <p>The choice can be represented as a branching. "left" or "right", "effective", "inefficient". According to the Suttas, the choice is not only not an intention, but is not even made out of intention. In DN 15 we read: "craving arises from feeling, search arises from craving, acquisition arises from search, decision-making arises from acquisition." And the intention, according to the chain of Dependent Origination, stands even before craving. So, it turns out that the arahant does not distinguish between</p>

		brahmavihārās as the object of the meditation.	<p>such a gross phenomenon as choice and such a subtle phenomenon as intention?</p> <p>2) There is also no renunciation in the definition of DA, which is the key point of application for the Right Intention of the Buddha.</p> <p>3) The two links of the Noble Path are mixed by Delson into one, although the aspect of Wisdom in the Path consists of two factors of the path – the Right Views and Right Intention. The Right Effort (Sammā Vāyāma) refers to the aspect of Concentration. Meanwhile, this division of the Path into aspects – Wisdom, Morality and Concentration – is in the Suttas.¹</p>
The Right Speech	Effective Communication	Right Speech is Effective Speech (or it could also be Effective Communication)	Here Delson echoes Bhante Vimalaramsi's misunderstanding, supporting him that Effective Communication is nonverbal, not verbal communication, but including the attitude. But, as we have considered on the example of BV, what they describe as communication are views and intentions, and if we started with the wrong views – that in the way of BV, that in the way of DA – we both before and after also have the wrong speech.
The Right Action or Conduct	Effective Behavior	Right Action is Effective Behavior	Effective behavior is "howling like a wolf with wolves." Effective behavior fundamentally allows for wrong actions. The Right Action of the Buddha has nothing to do with efficiency, but with virtue.
The Right Livelihood	Effective Livelihood	Right Livelihood is Effective Living	You can live dishonestly and at the same time effectively. You can sell something stolen once, and live your whole life happily. Let us repeat: efficiency is fundamentally unrelated to virtue, to the distinction between right and wrong, and can be aimed at any goal.
The Right Effort	Effective Application	Effective Choice (Sammā Saṅkappa) and Effective Application (Sammā Vāyāma)	Delson simply rewrites the definition of Bhante V, forgetting that taints are not only something that pops up in meditation, it's big habits, whole vectors and directions of life, in relation to which

¹ See for example MN 44, Culavedalla Sutta.

		<p>Effective choice is the choice to be in a wholesome state, while effective application is the process in which mind roots out unwholesome states, brings to fruition wholesome states and maintains them. This will be shown through the process of what is known as the 6R's, while using the brahmavihārās as the object of the meditation.</p>	<p>6R turns out to be just a useless movement of facial muscles.</p> <p>For a more detailed discussion of 6R, see one of the following chapters.</p>
The Right Mindfulness	Effective Observation	<p>Effective Observation (Sammā Sati)</p> <p>Effective observation is seeing how mind's attention moves when observing the four aspects of conditioned existence, namely the body, feeling, mindset and the phenomena, to liberate the mind. This, as you will see, is done through proper attention, with an emphasis on replacing the five hindrances with the seven factors of awakening. You will also see how applying the 6R process is also utilizing the seven factors of awakening.</p>	<p>Delson decided not to have the basics of mindfulness, but instead to have common ground. If BV only abstractly advises to watch the pigeon, then DA teaches to watch how the pigeon sits on the body, then on the feeling, then on the mind, then on the phenomena of the mind.</p>
The Right Concentration	Effective Collectedness	<p>Effective Collectedness (Sammā Samadhi)</p> <p>Effective collectedness is the maintaining of your attention on an object of meditation. In effective collectedness, you utilize effective observation and effective application to continue staying with that object.</p>	<p>We do not see a word about the real jhanas, which are described in the Right Concentration of the Buddha. Thus, Effective Collectedness means simply being with the object of meditation.</p>

* The definitions are from the book by Delson Armstrong "Mind Without Craving".

As a result, we get the scheme identical to the previous one.

Here is the official statement of DA from his book: "You will find that there are a lot of terms in this booklet that are different interpretations from my experience of the eightfold path, in relation to translation choices." – So Delson believes that it's just a matter of choosing a translation, and openly writes that he made these changes from his personal experience. After these words, it would be possible to immediately exclude the book by DA from the sphere of attention of a Buddhist, because it is obvious that the experience of the Buddha is the experience of complete development of the Noble Eightfold Path, the experience of full comprehension of the Four Noble Truths, absolute perfection in the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, whereas DA initially developed the "harmonious path" and received "harmonious knowledge and liberation", that is, he passed the wrong path of BV, and even if he received the highest fruit of the practice of BV, then this fruit is wrong. But even if we assume that he really became an arahant, he cannot formulate the Path better than the Buddha himself. During these centuries that have passed since the time of the Buddha's life, there have been many arahants, but none of them has changed anything in the formulations given by the Buddha.

To summarize. According to the Suttavada:

- The Four Noble Truths are one thing, and the Right Views – the First Aspect Of the Noble Eightfold Path – are another.
- There are no Foundations of Mindfulness, there are "places where awareness arises", and the work in the Fourth Satipatthana, where through the Teachings of the Buddha the practitioner comprehends the Four Noble Truths, in the Suttavada consists only in the fact that we are only doing 6R, trying to pull ourselves into Nibbana – into the 3rd Noble Truth, so to speak. We also apply 6R to everything else. At first we work with hindrances, at the end – with enlightenment factors.
- There is no Middle Path in the Suttavada, instead there is a Harmonious Path. The Harmonious Path and the Fourth Noble Truth are formally connected, but the fourth "place of awareness" – "Phenomena of the Mind in the Phenomena of the Mind" – is divorced from the Four Noble Truths, since they are not practiced, but instead practice 6R.
- The four Foundations of Mindfulness are absent in principle. Instead, there is "Harmonious Observation". Thus, there is no seventh link of the Noble Eightfold Path in the Harmonious and Effective Paths.

Conclusion #5

The formulations of the Path given by Bhante Vimalaramsi and Delson Armstrong are not even comments on the Noble Eightfold Path, but simply completely different paths that either run counter to or are so far from the original from the Suttas that once again the question arises why they should be called the Teachings of the Buddha at all. Unlike the Buddha's Dhamma, the BV and DA dhammas are imperfect and ill-conceived, and also lead in the wrong direction from the point of view of the Buddha-Dhamma, because they come from wrong views.

3. Suttavada Practices

As you have seen, theoretically, the target audience of the Suttavada is a maximum of 2 categories out of 48 capable of comprehending the Dhamma. The doctrinal foundations, such as the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, have been corrected, distorted and adjusted to personal meditative experiences and projections of BV and DA. As a result, from the universal Noble Truths, they turn into a manifesto of relaxation, smiling and letting go, which may be pleasant and interesting to the contemporary overstressed people, but at the same time has a very distant relation to the Buddha's Dhamma. But maybe BV and DA, having not formulated their teaching very well, nevertheless still taught in practice exactly as the Buddha teaches in the Suttas, and therefore the Suttavada, in spite of everything, justifies its name?

Let's look at the practices of the Suttavada, which within this school are considered to be the real Dhamma of the Buddha.

3.1. Metta with a spiritual friend

Metta with a spiritual friend – there is no such practice in the Suttas. The Buddha did not consider any preparatory practices necessary. He directly gives the practice of Brahmaviharas or Metta, according to the need, respectively, to overcome ill-will, cruelty, discontent and rejection. A spiritual friend is an "invention" by Bhante Vimalaramsi, taken by him from the treatise *Visuddhimagga*, which he himself rejected, declaring himself a Suttavada, following the Suttas, and refused to comment.

3.2. Overcoming the barriers

The practice of overcoming the barriers – there is also no such practice in the Suttas. BV also borrowed it from the *Visuddhimagga*, although distorted it in some way.

3.3. Six directions

The six directions are the only practice that the Suttavada has taken directly from the Suttas, albeit distorted at the same time. Here is a quote from the Suttas describing this practice (this is a standard passage that can be seen in many suttas, for example in SN 46.54 or MN 40):

"... dwell pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with [brahmavihara], likewise the second quarter, the third quarter, and the fourth quarter. Thus above, below, across, and everywhere, and to all as to oneself, dwell pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with [brahmavihara], vast, exalted, measureless, without hostility, without ill will."

We see that in the Suttas the verbs like "to pervade", "to imbue" are used, but not "to radiate", as in the instructions of the Suttavada. In terms of radiance, the Suttas only describe loving kindness itself, the first brahmavihara. Only it is shining and burning. The practice of the six directions is used by BV to achieve body loss, but, they say in the Suttavada, you can lose your body without the six directions, just sitting still, relaxing and remembering the breath. BV says

that for 4 days of brahmavihara practice, you get the same effect as from sixty days of meditation on the breath. Well, if by "effect" he means the body loss, then maybe it is.

And here we come back to the practitioners with the Painful Practice. For them, the method of the six directions is not just not pleasant, but painful, no matter how you do it – from the chest, from the head, from the whole body or around the body.

The radiance that BV makes people do from their head, and DA from the area around the body, does not exist in the Suttas. And as we discussed above, the Buddha did not teach anywhere to let go and drop the body, on the contrary, the recommendation to be aware of the body is constantly repeated in the Suttas. It is impossible to enter rupa-jhana by letting go of the body, because "rupa" means "form". Rupa is the space around which the body is built:

"Friends, just as, depending on wood, vines, grass and clay, the space surrounded by them is designated by the word "house", so when the space is surrounded by bones, tendons, muscles and skin, it is designated by the word "form"." (MN 28)

BV and DA, out of unwholesome habit, lose their body in meditation, believing that this is their talent and the goal of practice. They teach this to people who either acquire the same unwholesome habit, or are doomed to torment if they are those of Painful Practice. For such practitioners, it is simply impossible to let go of the body without going through it, so to speak.

Conclusion #6

The specific techniques of meditation with brahmaviharas taught in the Suttavada are not found in the Suttas.

3.4. 6R – is there this "magic wand" in the Suttas?

6R – the "highlight" of the Bhante V method – is absent in the Suttas. 6R – without deliberately smiling and relaxing the tension in the head – this is one of the options for working with distracting thoughts according to the Vitakasanthana Sutta (MN 20). It is funny that this particular sutta is rejected by BV, classifying it as a late insertion on the grounds that it also describes, as one of the methods of work, the intense rejection of thought, which contradicts the doctrine of the Suttavada.

But in any case, even if we take into account this particular case, it is not a kind of magic wand that the Buddha taught to knock on everything that arises.

Bhante Vimalaramsi states that 6R is the realization of Right Effort. I agree with this and DA, but is it really so? Let's try to figure it out.

The Right Effort-First about what is, in fact, the Right Effort.

3.4.1. What is the Right Effort?

Here is a standard description of the Right Effort from the Suttas (it can be found, for example, in DN 22):

"A monk arouses his will, puts forth effort, generates energy, exerts his mind, and strives to prevent the arising of evil and unwholesome mental states that have not yet arisen.

He arouses his will ... and strives to eliminate evil and unwholesome mental states that have already arisen.

He arouses his will ... and strives to generate wholesome mental states that have not yet arisen.

He arouses his will, puts forth effort, generates energy, exerts his mind, and strives to maintain wholesome mental states that have already arisen, to keep them free of delusion, to develop, increase, cultivate, and perfect them. "

Thus, the Right Effort has the following three characteristics:

- 1) It is implied that the Right Effort is practiced constantly, not only in meditation, and not only in contact with distraction or akusala dhammas.
- 2) It is implied that the Right Effort is exactly effort, diligence, application of force, perseverance.
- 3) It is implied (this follows from the fact that the Right Effort is part of the Noble Eightfold Path) that the Right Effort is universal, applicable to all cases of our work within the Path.

However, 6R is a method used precisely and only when distractions arise, and, in addition, the instructions for 6R specifically emphasize the need for relaxation and the absence of

"unnecessary" (that is, in fact, any) efforts. Now as for the versatility of the 6R. Does this method work for all the unwholesome states that have arisen?

For an alcoholic or a drug addict¹, it is not a question of meditation and the application of 6R to annoying thoughts. This is a question of long-term work, where medicines are needed, the help of specialists, determination is much more serious than a smile and relaxation of the head.

But even in less serious cases – 6R cannot always destroy the resulting contamination, as any TWIM practitioner can attest. If you are overcome with sensual desire, then no 6R will most likely help, and you will go and eat delicious or have sex, etc.

That's because not 6R is the Right Effort but the Right Effort is the Right Effort.

To quit an unwholesome habit at any cost, if necessary, even through tension and clenched teeth (see MN 20) is the Right Effort, and to try to change only with the help of a mental smile, acceptance and relaxation 6R is a kind of "wrong inability".

So, 6R does not correspond to any of the above three signs of the Right Effort.

Now let's consider whether 6R fulfills the four points that make up the Right Effort.

Prevention of unwholesome qualities that have not yet arisen: 6R cannot be done in advance, this method by definition is aimed at those phenomena that arise now.

Elimination of unwholesome mental qualities that have already arisen: we have already written about this above, but let's repeat. If you lose your will when passing by a pastry shop in the evening after work, then you need to avoid it, instead of applying 6R to thoughts about sweets when you pass by and seduce yourself.

The problem also lies in the fact that BV explicitly states that the 6R method is not intended to combat unwholesome dhammas. We "invite distractions (that is, unwholesome mental phenomena) home for tea, and we ourselves stop paying attention to them." The Buddha does not give such recommendations anywhere, on the contrary, unwholesome thoughts are something that should be eradicated in every way, by any means². As already mentioned, as one of the methods for achieving this goal, the Buddha suggests something similar to 6R, in the sutta MN 20 – when an unwholesome thought visits us, we relax, and sometimes it helps. Sometimes! But in other cases, you have to act with methods opposite to 6R: "clenching your teeth, pressing your tongue to the sky, knock down, crush your mind with your mind."

Let's be fair and fix that the second point of the Right Effort, although partially, in a small percentage of cases, is fulfilled.

¹ We use examples with people taking intoxicating substances, as this is a violation of prescriptions which is most socially acceptable and at the same time unambiguously negative for all. For example, sexual misconduct may have different interpretations for different people in different cultures, whereas theft or murder is too extreme a case.

² See for example MN 19, Dvedhavittaka Sutta.

Contributing to the emergence of good mental qualities: If you do not consider a smile as a good mental quality (which can be both evil and forced, and, moreover, is not mentioned in the list of good mental qualities in the Suttas) as well as relaxation (which can also occur in a drug addict when intoxicated, for example, that is, relaxation itself is not a good quality), the good mental quality in 6R as such is absent and is contained, except in the object of meditation to which we return as a result of performing 6R. But this is right only in the case when the object of meditation is loving kindness (about how this is a good quality in the performance of the Suttavada is a separate conversation). And if the object is, for example, breathing? In this case, the good quality of the mind, even if conditional, is not contained even in the object of meditation.

But more than that: among the good qualities of the mind mentioned in the Suttas, there are, for example, such as energy and diligence, or, say, delight in the body. But how can you contribute to the emergence of this kind of "active" good mental qualities if you constantly relax and throw away the body?

So, 6R does not contribute to the emergence of good mental qualities, and in the case of some of them, it even acts more as an inhibitor.

Maintaining the good qualities of the mind that have already arisen: how can 6R support, say, the dhamma research factor if you relax and have to "let go" of the dhamma, "turn away" from it (this is the second "R" – Release)? After all, if you do not do this – you will not perform 6R.

And again: how is it possible to maintain the qualities of energy or delight with the help of 6R?

But not only that: how can 6R, in principle, maintain any good quality, if by definition it is a situationally applied exercise?

3.4.2. Is 6R mentioned directly in the Suttas?

Although BV says that 6R was invented in the depths of the Suttavada only as a reformulation of the Right Effort for modern Man, yet can 6R be mentioned somewhere in the suttas as such? The Buddha, who perfectly knew the Dhamma, expounded it in thousands of ways, including perfectly decomposing the Teaching into lists in Anguttara Nikaya: ones, twos, and so on up to eleven, was very skillful in compiling digital codification. However, nowhere, including in the book of Sixes in Anguttara Nikaya, did he proclaim such a seemingly obvious concept as 6R.

3.4.3. The place of 6R in the Suttas

Let's take the example of the suttas mentioned above – MN 2, MN 20 and MN 128 – let's see how many methods of working with unwholesome states listed by the Buddha are covered by the 6R method (recall that in order to realize proper liberation, it is necessary to overcome all the impurities, that is, to use all the methods listed by the Buddha).

Majjhima Nikaya 20, Vitakkasaṇṭhāna Sutta			
#	Method of eliminating unwholesome thoughts	Is 6R suitable?	Explanation
1	Switching to the wholesome thoughts	No	6R does not work with images, and in the sutta it is proposed to switch between perceptions and ideas. 6R also implies the removal of all ideas indiscriminately – both good and bad, and staying in a pleasant state.
2	Seeing the danger of unwholesome thoughts	No	Since 6R is not an analytical action, but a technical one, it is impossible to consider the danger of thoughts, since this contradicts the principle of non-research contained in 6R.
3	Forgetting the unwholesome thoughts	No	6R implies a sort of effortless action, but the sutta says: "he tries to forget these thoughts, [tries] not to pay attention to them," that is, on such a case recommended by the Buddha, BV would say: "you try too hard – it's wrong. 6R your effort."
4	Relaxing the unwholesome thoughts	DA & No	6R only partly resembles this point. DA, we relax to the maximum, but there is nothing in the sutta about a smile and a restart, so we put "DA" only with a stretch. In fact, it is 4R's. Instead of a smile, this is the direction of attention to the good, and not to a smile. As already mentioned, the goodness of a smile is a very dubious thesis.
5	Suppressing the unwholesome thoughts	No	Definitely not (and Bhante himself emphasizes this), since this method contradicts the philosophy of smiling, non-effort and harmony, but we will talk about this point in detail, since this is one of the key points.

Majjhima Nikaya 2, Sabbāsava Sutta			
	Method of eliminating of taints	Is 6R suitable?	Explanation
1	Seeing	No	<p>Quote from the sutta:</p> <p>"What are the things unfit for attention that he attends to? <...> And what are the things fit for attention that he does not attend to? <...></p> <p>When he attends unwisely in this way, one of six views arises in him. The view "self exists for me" arises in him as true and established; or the view "no self exists for me" arises in him as true and established; or the view "I perceive self with self" arises in him as true and established; or the view "I perceive not-self with self" arises in him as true and established; or the view "I perceive self with not-self" arises in him as true and established; or he has some such view as this: "it is this self that speaks and feels and experiences here and there the result of good and bad actions; but this self of mine is permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change, and it will endure as long as eternity."</p> <p>As you can see, 6R at this point, if it were useful, it would be precisely in order to eliminate the development of a pernicious view associated with the "not-self", which, alas, both BV and even Arahant DA consider liberation.</p>
2	Restraining	No	<p>6R is not a preventive action, but an action aimed at the moment of the appearance of an already noticeable interference. Therefore, if you try to contain those impurities that could not have been with the help of containment, shifting this work to 6R, you get ready-made interference, instead of being able to contain the occurrence of interference in the bud – with the Right Intention and the Right Effort, and not the method of working with already manifested distractions.</p>
3	Using	No	<p>6R is not associated with non-point phenomena such as food, clothing and housing. In addition, it is wise to comprehend and do 6R – these are two incompatible things, since 6R implies not-comprehending, and not-paying attention to the details of what is happening.</p>
4	Enduring	No	<p>Quote:</p> <p>"What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by enduring? Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, bears cold and heat, hunger and craving, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun and creeping things; he endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable,</p>

			<p>distressing, and menacing to life."</p> <p>It is about patience in relation to unfavorable conditions that is being talked about here. 6R will not help from heat, cold, hunger and craving. That is, in the key of the BV technique – here you need to say: "With a smile, apply 6R to the above." As can be seen in the original text, neither 6R nor a smile is required to overcome these impurities. It's enough just to endure.</p>
5	Avoiding	No	Here we are talking about the scale at which 6R does not work – that is, not about meditation, but simply about life and avoiding unnecessary risks in practice.
6	Removing	No	<p>Quote:</p> <p>"What taints, bhikkhus, should be abandoned by removing?</p> <p>Here a bhikkhu, reflecting wisely, does not tolerate an arisen thought of sensual desire; he abandons it, removes it, does away with it, and annihilates it."</p> <p>6R could be suitable at this point if there were no philosophy of harmony and smiling "non-effort", because even discarding such obviously toxic thoughts in TWIM would be regarded as excessive pressure and "pushing too hard", and "DROPSS"¹ is needed.</p>
7	Developing	No	Performing 6R contributes to the development of drowsiness, the "energizing" Factors of Enlightenment are suppressed, and the soothing ones are more likely to be mixed with drowsiness and do not have the necessary purity to be Enlightenment Factors at all.
Majjhima Nikaya 128, Upakkilesa Sutta			
	Method of eliminating of imperfections	Is 6R suitable?	Explanation
1	Doubt	No	Doubt is not just critical thought, but a specific state of mind. 6R does not work with states of mind in any way.
2	Loss of focus	No	6R actually contributes to the loss of focus.

¹ This abbreviation is used in the Suttavada to memorize the "harmonious mode of action" – Don't Resist Or Push, just Soften and Smile

3	Dullness and drowsiness	No	6R actually contributes to the dullness and drowsiness
4	Terror	No	See explanation to the imperfection 1.
5	Excitement	DA	
6	Discomfort	No	See explanation to the imperfection 1.
7	Excessive energy	DA	
8	Overly lax energy	No	6R actually contributes to lack of energy.
9	Longing	DA	
10	Perception of diversity	No	6R does not affect the perception of the unity and diversity in any way, because these are factors related to concentration.
11	Excessive concentration on forms	DA	
A lot of suttas, for example, MN 10, DN 22 etc.			
	Hindrances (nivaranas) – sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and anxiety, doubt and uncertainty.		<p>If we are talking about interference so weak that they pass if you just ignore them, then 6R will work. But only in this case.</p> <p>If we are talking about strong interference, for which methods are listed, for example, in MN 20, then, as you have already seen, 6R will be useless.</p> <p>Если мы говорим о помехах настолько слабых, что они проходят если на них просто не обращать внимания, то 6R будет работать. Но только в этом случае.</p> <p>Если же мы говорим о сильных помехах, для которых перечислены методы, например, в МН 20, то, как вы уже видели, 6R будет бесполезен.</p>

3.4.4. Epic with MN 20

Let's make a small digression regarding the method of suppressing unwholesome thoughts from the sutta MN 20, since it is about this sutta and because of this method mentioned in it, Bhante Vimalaramsi especially often says that either this method was added to the sutta by Hindus, or this whole sutta is such an insertion. BV argues that method #5 (suppression of unwholesome thoughts by "clenching your teeth and pressing your tongue to the sky") is described in another sutta as non-working.

It should always be remembered, and if you have studied the Suttas, then you know for sure that the Buddha always systematically sets out lists, if there is a criterion for ordering, then the Buddha necessarily lists them in either ascending or descending order. Similarly, in the incomprehensible for BV sutta MN 20 – the first method is the most preferable ... the fourth is the one similar to 6R (and this is almost the last method!), and the last, most rude one is the suppression of the mind. There is no doubt that these are the steps, since each subsequent method begins with introductory words – "if the previous method did not help ..."

So, in which sutta is method # 5 described as non-working? In MN 36 Mahasaccaka Sutta. Let's quote the corresponding lines from it.

Bodhisattva in MN 36:

"I thought, 'Suppose, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I knock down, restrain and crush my mind with my mind.' So, with my teeth clenched and my tongue pressed against the roof of my mouth, I knock down, restrain and crush my mind with my mind. While I did so, sweat ran from my armpits. But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving."

And here is a quote from MN 20 about this very method.

Buddha in MN 20:

"If, while he is giving attention to stilling the thought-formation of those thoughts, there still arise in him evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion, then, with teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he should beat down, constrain, and crush mind with mind. When, with his teeth clenched and his tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, he beats down, constrains, and crushes mind with mind, then any evil unwholesome thoughts connected with desire, with hate, and with delusion are abandoned in him and subside. With the abandoning of them his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated."

So, MN 36 tells about the Bodhisatta, that is, about Siddhatta Gotama before he became a Buddha. In MN 20, the Buddha, an enlightened being, gives instructions for practice intended for all practitioners. In these two cases, we are talking about different things:

1. The Bodhisattva in MN 36 says that this method is not suitable for eliminating all craving and ignorance, i.e. for achieving the Complete Enlightenment.

2. The Buddha in MN 20 speaks only about a period, say during a day or an hour, when the practitioner is overcome by bad, unwholesome thoughts associated with craving, anger, delusion, and no other measures work. He actually says that this is the most extreme option, placing him last on the list. When a person reached this method, the pollution with which he works, if not disappeared, then it certainly became much weaker.

The Buddha speaks of this method as extreme in severity and as situational. It is definitely not positioned as a method leading to the complete liberation. But why does this method not work for Bhante Vimalaramsi and works for Buddha?

The Buddha and His disciples have knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, the Path and the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which the Bodhisattva did not have yet, and which is not in the teachings of the BV. And if you use all four Basics, if you are well established in the body, the practitioner will see that this is really a working option. You can just sit out, and without much suffering, unwholesome thoughts, and they will pass, of course, not until full enlightenment, but the Buddha does not call for this, even as a future Bodhisattva, recognizing that this method is not suitable as a tool for achieving final liberation.

Bhante Vimalaramsi explained the fact that this method does not work for him not by the fact that he is doing something wrong, but by the fact that the Sangha allowed inaccuracies to leak into the texts. But there are no inaccuracies. This method works. Even a non-meditator, and even without the Basics of Mindfulness and the Four Noble Truths, can close his eDA, clench his teeth and make a decision – "I will not give in." And after a while, the pernicious thought passes.

3.4.5. Smile

BV encourages and even makes everyone smile, and teaches them to do it always. The smile is part of 6R - this is the fourth "P" (Resmile, "back to smile"). But does the need to smile find confirmation in the Suttas?

Smiling monks are mentioned in the Suttas only once and, as can be concluded from the quotation, this is not their practice, especially constant, but an inner state, and sincere. There is no direct instruction from the Buddha regarding the constant smile in the Suttas.

Here is a quote from Sutta MN 89, Dhammachetia Sutta, which mentions smiling monks:

"But here I see smiling and friendly monks, sincerely joyful, openly contented, their abilities [of the senses] are fresh, they live in peace, unperturbed, live on what others give them, stay with [alienated] minds, like wild deer."

Remember that the Buddha was the living personification of the Dhamma. But the Suttas repeatedly say that Arahants and Buddhas do not smile for no reason. If a smile could help liberation in any way, the Buddha and the Arahants in every sutta would talk about it. But even to a person who is far from spiritual searches, it is obvious that a smile can be of different nature. Gloating, condescending, happy, a smile of despair, etc. It is also quite obvious that the

fact that a person smiles says little about how dark his mind is now. Moreover, this is what the Runna Sutta says about laughter (AN 3.107):

"(3) Too much laughter showing the teeth, is regarded as childish. <...> and when you appropriately pleased [in Dhamma], it's enough to simply smile."

Bhante refers to the research of some scientists who have proved that when you smile, or more precisely, when the corners of your mouth are directed upwards, your mental state also improves. But why is it easier for BV to believe "some scientists" than the arahants led by the Buddha? Scientists, no matter how brilliant they may be, obviously do not have the exhaustive understanding of the mind of its states that a Buddha or an arahant possesses, especially since the research was clearly conducted not in the context of the Dhamma, but rather in the context of secular psychology, for which "improving the mental state" is not at all equivalent to that from the point of view of the Dhamma.

So, Arahants and Buddhas do not smile for no reason, but to become an arahant, you need to "smile" yourself to arahantship – this, it turns out, is the logic of BV. But it is impossible to smile at ourselves until we understand that hell is waiting for us with open arms; it is impossible to smile at ourselves until we understand how precarious our position in life is and how close and real death is; it is impossible, smiling, to come to the understanding that life consists entirely of suffering. Meanwhile, this is the understanding that arahant comes to¹. Rather, on the contrary, cultivating a smile will only distance us from this understanding, strengthening us in carelessness.

3.4.6. 6R as Adhamma

6R can be done with absolutely no desire, without making every effort, without developing perseverance and without showing intention towards wholesome and unwholesome qualities. Moreover, when you make 6R, you don't even understand whether you are exposing a wholesome or unwholesome quality to 6R, because you are applying 6R to everything in a row. You apply 6R to everything distracting, in fact – to everything that prevents the mind from falling asleep. Instead of determining the nature of the thoughts that arise, we let them go.

BV himself says that ignorance comes from the verb "to ignore", but what is 6R if not ignoring? Instead of exploring emerging phenomena and states, knowing the suffering contained in them and the true path of getting rid of suffering through satipatthana, we learn ... to turn away from these phenomena and states, to forget them, to ignore them, to turn away from suffering, to get away from it. Thus, the practice of TWIM turns out to be nothing more than a consistent practice of cultivating ignorance!

Hence, the result of this practice is not at all surprising – going into unconscious blackout which is called nirodha in the Suttavada. More details about this will be described in section 3.8.

¹ See, for example, SN 20.6, Dhanuggaha Sutta.

The Buddha taught us to work with taints in different ways – we see such suttas as Sabbasava Sutta MN 2, Vitakkasanthana Sutta MN 20, Upakilesa Sutta MN 128 and many others, but the Suttavada suggests always using 6R...

Conclusion #7

6R is not the Right Effort both in its features and in its action. Methods similar (but only partially) to 6R are described in the Suttas, but occupy a very modest position among the other methods. Moreover, in the way it is taught, 6R forms a method leading in the opposite direction to where the Buddha led.

3.5. Forgiveness Practice

Here, the most bloodcravingy homicidal maniac in millennia, and perhaps all since that time, comes to our aid – Angulimala¹.

Ask yourself how a homicidal maniac who took the life of 999 people, wearing a necklace of his victims' fingers around his neck, became an arahant (and he, we recall, gained complete and final enlightenment)? Enlightenment, among other things, implies an understanding of kamma, an understanding of how craving, anger and delusion work. This is an understanding of how, shackled by ignorance and confused by craving, we are plunged headlong into the horror of samsara. And be sure that Angulimala understood everything that he had done. However, in the Sutta, Angulimala's path to enlightenment does not differ from the description of the path of other arahants.

Let's ask ourselves why? How is this possible? What kind of method was used by a person who did as many bad things as Angulimala? Why didn't he need the practice of forgiveness? And why do I, a person who has not killed anyone, need to "work out" words, insults, some not even physical injuries received or inflicted by me in a special way.

Moreover, even without Angulimala, there is no practice of forgiveness under any kind in the Suttas. Ask even Bhante Vimalaramsi himself and he will confirm it. Yes, it is not in the Suttas. But... again, BV comes to the aid of the Buddha.

3.5.1. What is the practice of Forgiveness?

Below, the word vipassana is used to refer to a specific method of meditation practiced, for example, in the Mahasi Sayado school (and through which Bhante Vimalaramsi went at one time), and not in the meaning in which this term appears in the Suttas.

Everyone who has listened to Bhante Vimalaramsi's stories about vipassana, and who has gone through this practice himself, is painfully familiar with these stories – "vipassana", among other things, means that you sit and look at the pain until it passes. And so BV, who rejected vipassana as an incorrect technique, invented his own kind of vipassana – the vipassana for the mind. While doing the practice of forgiveness, you sit and look at the mental pain until it passes. You smile, warm it, keep it in mind, do not let your mind be distracted from this pain. Until the pain goes away! Thus, it turns out that Bhante Vimalaramsi did not abandon vipassana, but invented his own vipassana, probably unintentionally, since he criticizes the vipassana method absolutely decisively.

An additional question in this regard is this: where does anatta disappear from the harmonious and effective path of BV and DA during the practice of forgiveness?

The practice of Forgiveness is more like a kind of near-Christian method and, again, there is nothing similar in the Suttas and, moreover, it cannot be. Let's try to figure out why this is so.

¹ See MN 86.

3.5.2. Why is there no practice of Forgiveness in the Suttas and could not be?

Let's consider this in detail. What really happens when you practice Forgiveness?

When you have a grudge, you have one of the hindrances – it's regret. But this hindrance is colored very personally – that is, at this moment you also have a conceit – a kind of "self-view". Both of these aspects are very strong in this case.

In the Suttavada, this is explained as follows: in the practice of forgiveness, you learn exactly how to look at the situation non-personally, without conceit, without a "self-view". This, the teachers of the Suttavada say, is the essence of this practice.

But in fact, when the "seer" (a kind of "self") trains to see the "victim" (which is also a kind of "self") as a kind of "not-me", and even more so, sincerely trying to accept and forgive all this – what you are only doing is training yourself in a special kind of self-view. This is one of those "self"-views that are listed, say, in the MN 2 sutta ("I" as "not-I").

Let's remember the formula of forgiveness taught by BV: "I forgive you, you forgive me." You strengthen the very tumor¹, the very disease that the Buddha taught to discard. Yes, as a result, your pain decreases, but only due to the fact that your "self" is a picture, your faith in "self" becomes stronger.

Any view associated with the "self" is a "jungle of views", MN2. Therefore, the desire to see something "impersonally" is also a variant of sakkaya-ditthi, "self"-views. Emotional deafness does not mean inner peace, "self-acceptance" is no better than self-blame. Therefore, practice of Forgiveness does not lead to upekkha as a Noble form of equanimity, but to a worldly neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, that is, to indifference, and not lead to the kindness but to narcissism.

In Satipatthana, we learn to look at phenomena in the body, feelings, states of mind and phenomena of the mind as phenomena, but not at perceptions – people and situations from thoughts or formations – our actions and reactions. All this consists of more elementary phenomena described in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, and it is these more elementary phenomena that we learn to see.

Let's walk through the links of the Path when the practitioner acts according to the instructions of Bhante Vimalaramsi. For additional clarity, take the definitions of the Noble Eightfold Path (N8P) from the Suttas. So.

¹ See SN 35.248, Yavakalapi Sutta.

N8P	Right / Wrong in the forgiveness practice	Explanation
Right View	Wrong	<p>By practicing forgiveness, you strengthen the self-view, which contradicts even the incorrect definition of the first point of the Noble Path of Bhante himself (that it is anatta).</p> <p>The First Noble Truth: when you accept pain, agreeing that there is pain, you teach yourself not to see the First Noble Truth. Instead, you teach yourself not to feel pain, "not to bother" about pain. Here is the pain, I accept it, and the Buddha teaches that it should be fully understood, and not taken for granted. As such, accepting something does not help understanding this phenomenon (non-acceptance, however, too, but this does not apply to this topic). For example, if a person is worried about some symptom, for example, a headache, he or she can learn to "live with it" and raise a new "self" that accepts pain. But this will not help him in any way to understand the cause of this pain.</p> <p>Let's repeat it once again, because this is extremely important: in Buddhism, pain is the subject of research, it does not need to be accepted or not accepted, but studied. Both "acceptance" and "non-acceptance" is a way to get rid of pain, to suffer less from it. But the destruction of pain occurs through research, through penetration into its causes, through insight into its ubiquity and its composition. But in the Suttavada, it turns out that instead of knowing suffering, we simply turn away from it.</p> <p>The Second Noble Truth: if you blur your vision with a smile and gentle, this is the opposite of what needs to be done with the Second Truth, namely, to see craving, which is the cause of pain. And yes, the craving is not "I don't like it mind", but a much more subtle phenomenon. Instead, you only change the manifestations of craving, making them less acute, less painful, which leads to a false sense of well-being.</p> <p>The Third Noble Truth: The Buddha taught the cessation of suffering, not the acceptance of suffering. Destruction, cutting off craving. Throwing craving out of life for the destruction of suffering, and not indulging craving and agreeing with suffering. And the relief that you feel when forgiveness finally happens has neither wisdom nor liberation behind it, because in fact you just sat through this story, got used to it, learned to look at it without emotion. "Vipassana for the Mind" by Bhanta Vimalaramsi has reached its apogee.</p> <p>The Fourth Noble Truth is actually N8P, so we will continue to consider the remaining points of the Eightfold Path.</p>
Right Intention	Wrong	<p>You are not looking for renunciation of this state, you are looking for the cessation of this state, you are not looking for freedom from evil, you want, without changing anything radically in yourself, for this "evil" in you to stop, for the pain to end. But this is not enough: <i>you accept and forgive the inept qualities of your mind, you accept your own misunderstanding, your own ignorance</i>, although the definition of the Right Intention</p>

		says that we must renounce all this and direct all our efforts to prevent all inept qualities in ourselves.
Right Speech	Wrong	When you accept a specific situation, you purposefully use the wrong speech. The Right Speech consists in calling regret as regret, pain as pain, the self-view as self-view, craving as craving.
Right Action	?	The Right Actions may not apply to the practice of forgiveness as such, but if this offense is related to the fact that you or someone violated this point – killed, stole, etc. – then it would be right to see it, see how wrong actions are felt in one of the parties, and use it as a lesson for the future, never to do so.
Right Livelihood	?	The same thing.
Right Effort	Wrong	You sit for hours and weeks to solve a particular manifestation of interference, whereas you must learn to see interference as a hindrance, as well as the good – the absence of interference. You purposefully place a hindrance in your field of attention and keep it there, trying to accept, that is, you are doing the opposite of what the Right Effort is.
Right Mindfulness	Wrong	If you had all four Foundations of Mindfulness, instead of three or two, you would eliminate this offense in a couple of days, because it is just a hindrance, and hindrances weaken and disappear when mindfulness is established in the body and a wise direction of attention is used. We will give an example of the Right Mindfulness below.
Right Concentration	Wrong	The practice of forgiveness is not related to jhanas in principle. It's just a fluttering in a piece of mind, hit by a hindrance, eaten by craving and pierced by the pain you are holding. There is nothing in common with the four rupa-jhanas here, as in all TWIM, however.

3.5.3. How to work with taints according to the Suttas (on the example of resentment)?

Let's try to figure out, how could it be possible, correctly applying wise attention, to consider, for example, resentment from the position of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness?

1. Body – is sitting in meditation, your jaw is shaking, and there is a tendency to bend; pain in the heart area, the face is compressed, the eyes are squinting, the forehead is cramping;
2. Feelings – the painfulness of all these sensations;
3. Mind – mind with rejection, mind with anger, mind scattered;
4. Mental phenomena

a. from the position of the five hindrances, this is a hindrance called restlessness and regret + malevolence.

Or

b. from the perspective of the five aggregates, there are also corresponding bodily sensations, and a painful feeling, and perceptions – pictures and definitions of resentment, and formations, and, of course, consciousness, in which all this is reflected. As for formations:

- i. bodily: the body is straining, the breath is lost
- ii. verbal: the mind embarks on incorrect speech and forgets about correct speech when it comes into contact with these phenomena
- iii. mental is the continuation of the generation of smaller painful sensations and perceptions as a reaction to the already existing ones from the point b.

Or

c. from the position of the six spheres – involved

- i. mind – mind objects and their fetters
- ii. body – sensations and their fetters

(6 out of 10 fetters)

- the self-view (sakkaya ditthi)
- Ill-will (vyapada)
- conceit (mana)
- striving for the non-existence of form (arupa-raga)
- worry and regret (uddhacca)

- ignorance – because the meditator does not see the Four Noble Truths.

Or

d. from the position of the seven factors of enlightenment – awareness is weak, no research, energy is not enough, no joy, no calm in the body, there is concentration but it's wrong, no equanimity.

Or

e. from position of the Noble Truths (NT)

- 1NT – "I don't want to see the pain" – the practitioner ignores pain.
- 2NT – "I want there to be no resentment" – craving for non-existence, I want it to be pleasant, I want revenge – craving for sensuality or existence.
- 3NT – no, because the practitioner does not reject craving.
- 4NT – no.

As you can see, following the Suttas, you can extract much more Wisdom¹ from such a phenomenon as resentment. With a similar approach, which is described in the Satipathanna Sutta, you would dissect this resentment into parts, and would sit rubbing your hands waiting for it to arise again to dissect it again, and would be surprised to find that it weakens before your eyes.

Another option of working with resentment or dislike in accordance with the Suttas could be to use, say, the sutta AN 5.161 as a guide.

Apparently, faced with the fact that the practice of forgiveness often has an effect rather the opposite of what was stated, recently, a softened version of it has been increasingly taught in the Suttavada – where, instead of focusing on emotionally significant persons, we apply 6R (a modified version, with "accept" instead of "release") to them, thus immediately relaxing and letting them go. This option is somewhat safer in terms of the development of psychotic states in the practitioner, but it is still harmful from the perspective of the Dhamma.

Conclusion #8

The practice of forgiveness is rather a near-Christian practice that helps to strengthen the self-view, which means that from the point of view of the Dhamma, this method is harmful.

¹ BV interprets wisdom as the knowledge of the Dependent Origination, but in the suttas wisdom is interpreted differently, which we will talk about in the section on the Dependent Origination.

3.6. Dependent Origination in the Suttavada and in the Suttas

Let us list the points that contradict the suttas, or at least are questionable in how the Suttavada interprets Dependent Origination (DO).

3.6.1. Fetishization of DO

Dependent Origination occupies a special place in the Suttavada. Bhante Vimalaramsi asserts that it is the comprehension of the DO that is the primary task and the cornerstone in the Teaching of the Buddha. When wisdom is mentioned in the Suttas, BV says, it means knowledge of DO. But there are no such statements in the Suttas. Noble Truths come first in the Suttas. It was about them that the Buddha spoke in his first sermon. It is the knowledge of Noble Truths that Sariputta speaks of as wisdom, for example, in MN 43. Yes, the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths inevitably leads to the comprehension of DO. Hence, it is not surprising that the Buddha says: "Whoever has comprehended the DO has comprehended the Dhamma, whoever has comprehended the Dhamma has comprehended the DO." However, if we focus on DO to the detriment of Noble Truths, we will not know either one or the other. Nevertheless, BV often quotes the above words of the Buddha in confirmation of the priority of DO in the Dhamma, although this is an obvious logical substitution.

But why is it necessary to put the DO forward in the first place? The fact is probably that the comprehension of Noble Truths inevitably leads to the need to comprehend *dukkha*, the First Truth. And this contradicts the doctrine of the Suttavada. In addition, the Fourth Truth contains a Path, and there are many points in the Path that, if you read their definitions in the Suttas, look completely un-Suttavadin. Therefore, the Noble Truths need to be glossed over, mentioned in passing, and maximum attention should be paid to the DO, which is not only safe from a doctrinal point of view, but also profitable in terms of marketing, as will be discussed below, in paragraphs 3.6.4 and 3.6.5.

3.6.2. Links of DO – one by one and one after another?

Bhante Vimalaramsi asserts that the links in the chain of Dependent Origination always go one after the other, feeding each other and like dominoes that fall in turn.

But if it were true, then there would be looping, and "aging and death" would feed ignorance. However, there are no such statements anywhere in the Suttas. Suttas assert interdependency between DO links but no more than that.

In addition, from such an interpretation it follows that craving arises only at one of the stages of DO, after Feeling, whereas from Suttas it rather follows that craving permeates our entire life.

In the Suttavada, this contradiction is solved by the thesis that the terminology in the Suttas is not thorough, and, say, craving as a term does not mean exactly the same thing as, say, craving in Noble Truths. What follows from this thesis is considered in paragraph 3.6.8.

In addition, the teachers of the Suttavada get out of this difficulty by arguing that DO should be interpreted at different levels (micro-level, medium-level and macro-level), and in each level, DO provides micro-cycles of DO, and thus the craving is present in every link. But there is nothing like this in the Suttas.

3.6.3. Craving / tanha

Bhante Vimalaramsi says that tanha (craving) is "I like it / I don't like it mind", and also that tanha manifests as tension and tightness in your head. The entire TWIM method is further based on this postulate. However, how justified is this definition of the craving / tanha? The definition of craving in the suttas contains no mention of tension, either in the head or anywhere else¹. The mind in a state of formalized (not)desire is also more like a much later link of Dependent Origination – Clinging (upādāna) or even Being (bhāva).

3.6.4. "Submergence" of the DO's part

The "submergence" of a significant part of the chain of Dependent Origination. Bhante Vimalaramsi asserts that a significant part of Dependent Origination – namely all the pre-Contact links – cannot be seen in everyday life, but only in deep meditative states. There is no indication of this anywhere in the Suttas, because "The Dhamma is visible here and now." If some concepts describing the present state of a person require special conditions for their perception, then they are not visible here and now, and it turns out that the Buddha contradicted himself. However, such a statement is beneficial for Suttavada from the point of view of marketing. When, during interviews, the teachers of the Suttavada point to certain phenomena as "those" invisible links of the DO, the student feels like a great meditator, and this adds points to the popularity of the Suttavada.

3.6.5. Myriads of consciousnesses per second

"Hundreds of thousands and millions of consciousnesses per second." Bhante Vimalaramsi claims that impulses of "consciousness", for example, visual consciousness or "eye consciousness" occur at a frequency of hundreds of thousands of times per second, and we can see this in meditation. At the same time, he points out that periodically occurs in meditation (and in fact not only in meditation), in general, the most common pulsation in the senses. Moreover, this pulsation always has a significantly lower frequency than the kilo- and megahertz indicated by Bhante. But the fact is that the human brain, in principle, is not able to generate or fix such a frequency. This is contrary to physiology. But more than that, nothing of the kind is mentioned in the Suttas. According to the Suttas, we should consider each link in the context of the Four Noble Truths, it is not something observed just as a flicker in the eyes. However, this interpretation, again, is extremely useful from the point of view of marketing. When people at retreats, who at some point saw a certain flicker in their eyes, are told that these are the same very myriad consciousnesses, and that this means that you are a super-advanced meditator, it causes inspiration and belief that the Suttavada is broadcasting the truth.

¹ See for example the definition of craving in MN 9 or DN 22.

3.6.6. Invisibility of the Ignorance

The "invisibility" of ignorance. According to Bhante Vimalaramsi, ignorance (avijja), that is, the first link of Dependent Origination, is invisible. We begin to see it only after we overcome it, that is after we become awakened. Again, this is nowhere in the Suttas, even indirectly, and again we recall that "The Dhamma is visible here and now." Moreover, in MN9, where Sariputta describes in detail the Right Views, it is said that understanding ignorance is part of the Right Views. In this (as well as in many other) sutta it says:

"And what is ignorance?... Ignorance about suffering, ignorance about the origin of suffering, ignorance about the cessation of suffering, ignorance about the path leading to the cessation of suffering."

So, most likely, you must see your ignorance about the Noble Truths before you know them, that is, before the awakening.

3.6.7. "Psychologization" of DO

The diminution of the doctrine of DO to psychological theory is observed in Suttavada. BV interprets the Birth link as "The Birth of an action", and Old Age and Death link as "Negative consequences of an action". Thus, it turns into a description of everyday cases and our reactions to them. But it was not by chance that the Buddha chose such names. Moreover, they are also described in detail in the Suttas. For example, the definitions of these links can be found in MN 9, the Sammaditthi Sutta. So, in the Suttas, Birth is exactly the birth of beings, Old Age and Death are exactly old age and death. The Buddha's teaching is not a kind of psychotherapy, but a path of total liberation on the scale of rebirth. Therefore, it is an all-consuming process in which this life of ours and our other lives are inscribed. At the level of psychotherapy, this concept also works, but to limit the Dhamma only to this level means to belittle and ultimately distort it.

3.6.8. Non-compliance with the law of identity

This concerns not only how Bhante Vimalaramsi interprets the DO, it permeates the entire doctrine of the Suttavada. BV claims that the terminology in the Suttas is actually not thorough, that is, for example, craving in Dependent Origination is not the same craving as in the Four Noble Truths. Consciousness in Dependent Origination is not the same consciousness as in the Five Aggregates of Clinging. The feeling in Dependent Origination is not the same feeling as in the Five Aggregates, but in the Basics of Awareness, the meaning of this term differs from both, and so on.

According to this point of view, the meaning of the terms changes due to the fact that different scale of events and different functional content are considered in different cases. Thus, it turns out that each term must be considered in a local semantic context. And this is nothing but a violation of the first law of logic – the law of identity. Logic is not some kind of whim invented by the ancient Greeks. These are objective laws of correct thinking. The use of the same terms in different senses, that is, a violation of the first law of logic – is a gross mistake in the formulation

of thought. It turns out that Bhante Vimalaramsi himself, perhaps without noticing it, claims that the Buddha, when expounding the Dhamma, was illogical, and therefore imperfect as a thinker and as a teacher. This is not said outright, but it is all the more dangerous: without noticing it, we begin to believe Bhante Vimalaramsi more than the Buddha. In this way, faith in the Buddha is undermined.

Meanwhile, all the terms in Dependent Origination are given precise definitions¹, and they coincide with the definitions of these terms without connection with Dependent Origination. That is, here we see a contradiction to the Suttas again.

Conclusion #9

The concept of Dependent Origination is unreasonably put forward by the Suttavada to the first and key place in the Buddha's Dhamma. At the same time, the Suttavadin interpretation of the Dependent Origination does not correspond to the Suttas, but is formulated in such a way as to work as much as possible on the image of the Suttavada.²

¹ See for example SN 12.2, Patikkasamuppavadavibhanga Sutta.

² At the same time, we do not claim that this is done consciously.

3.7. Jhanas in the Suttavada and in the Suttas

Jhanas occupy an important place in the teaching of the Buddha, it is in fact the Right Concentration. At the same time, these states are known in the Buddhist world as something exclusive and very difficult to achieve.

But then Suttavada appears and says: "You can easily achieve jhanas if you do as we say." It's okay that these jhanas are a little different from what they are usually described, it's just that everyone else describes them incorrectly. In fact, jhanas are quite easy to achieve. To do this, you need to relax, smile and feel good. And voila – you are in jhana.

But are these the jhanas mentioned in the suttas? The Buddha says that the jhanas provide shelter from the world's Evil (see MN 25, for example).

In the fourth jhana, according to the Suttas, breathing stops¹, and a person gains access to supernatural abilities. Neither of these things happens even close in the Suttavada fourth jhana.

Further. In the arupa realms, according to Bhante Vimalaramsi, we can feel if someone touches us. However, in the suttas we read²:

"with the complete overcoming of the perceptions of forms, with the extinction of perceptions caused by the senses, not paying attention to the perception of diversity, [perceiving]: "space is limitless," the monk enters and remains in the base of limitless space."

That is, it is clearly stated: in the arupa bases there are no perceptions from the senses and there is no perception of "diversity", that is, objects of the surrounding world. BV appeals to the sutta MN 111, showing that in all arupa bases, except the fourth, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception, there is contact, feeling and perception. However, contact can also be mental, and it remains in the three arupa bases. There is no any contact of "diversity" that is the contact of other five senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body).

So, there are many suttas that say that perception through the senses is turned off in the arupa spheres, perception of the surrounding world is turned off. And there is only one sutta (MN 111), which says that contact remains in the arupas (without specifying which contact remains). So, even these words can be interpreted in such a way that it will not contradict the rest of the suttas. Nevertheless, BV interprets these words in contradiction to the rest of the suttas, but according to his personal doctrine.

In fact, the arupa bases according to Bhante Vimalaramsi are nothing more than states of very deep relaxation, when the body ceases to be felt simply by virtue of relaxation. In general, all the states in the Suttavada, which they interpret as jhanas, are, if we proceed from the description of jhanas in the Suttas and Traditions, pre-jhanic states. In the Abhidhamma, such states are apparently called "beautiful sensory mind states of Kamaloka". These are just

¹ See for example SN 36.11, Rahogata Sutta. Quote: "For one who has attained the fourth jhana, in-breathing and out-breathing have ceased."

² See AN 9.39.

pleasant worldly states without obvious manifestations of anger, greed and delusion. The real jhanas are much higher states. The practice of the Suttavada does not reach any of them. That is, the practice of Suttavada remains within Kamaloka, and therefore within the "hunting grounds of Mara".

In conclusion, it should also be noted that in the way the jhanas are taught in the Suttavada, again, as mentioned above, psychological manipulation is used – psychoinduction: when a practitioner comes to a teacher, he asks "leading" questions: "have you experienced a sudden joy during meditation?" or "has it ever happened that the mental utterance of phrases of loving kindness began to interfere?" or "wasn't it so that you relaxed so much that you stopped feeling your hands or the whole body?" or "wasn't it so that the feeling of loving kindness from the heart spread higher into the head?" If you ask a person such closed questions, 90 percent of the interviewees will answer "yes", finding something similar in their experience. Each answer "yes" is interpreted by the teacher as one or another jhana. As a result, the participants of the retreats already in the first days allegedly experience jhanas. This does not benefit practitioners, but it goes to the advantage of the popularity of the Suttavada.

Conclusion #10

The jhanas of the Suttavada are not the jhanas of which the Buddha speaks, and of which the Tradition speaks. However, their interpretation in the Suttavada is such that it works as much as possible for the image of the Suttavada.¹

¹ And again, we don't claim that this was done deliberately.

3.8. Noble Ones in the Suttavada and in the Suttas

Earlier, in the section on 6R, we said that the whole doctrine of the Suttavada is based on the thesis that *tanha*-craving is equal to tension and tightness in your head. Therefore, all practice is aimed at the total relaxation of this tension.

As a result, the essence of the practice of meditation in the Suttavada is to learn to gradually slow down the work of your mind, to relax the tension in your mind as much as possible (specifically, the tension in your head). Everything in the TWIM is subordinated to this task: for example, it is strongly recommended to remain completely motionless and keep your eyes completely closed, as well as to take a comfortable pose (but not too much so as not to fall asleep ahead of time).

Complete, close to "zero", slowing-relaxation of the mind is called *nirodha* in the Suttavada. Here, for example, is a quote from the book "Path to Nibbana" by BV's disciple David Johnson:

"At that moment, the cessation of craving (*nirodha samāpatti*) occurs. This is the state of no feeling, no perception, and no consciousness arising at all. The mind just stops, and Nibbana arises."

Let's describe this state: the practitioner is sitting, there is no drowsiness, he gradually calms down more and more, lets go of everything, maintaining awareness until the last moment¹, and then at some point there is a complete shutdown. After a while, the practitioner turns on again, for the first few moments he does not understand where he is and how much time has passed, the world seems to reboot, in the first moments some flashes and patterns are visible in his eyes. Even if several minutes have passed in this state, the person feels completely rested.

The Suttavada teachers confirm that this is *nirodha*. The problem is that it is not *nirodha*. Such a description – the shutdown of perception, feeling, consciousness – is quite suitable, say, for fainting or for deep sleep without dreams, or, say, for Hindu *turiya*. *Nirodha* in the Suttas is a consequence of following the Noble Eightfold Path and, in particular, the development of the Right Concentration, that is, *jhanas*, and *jhanas* are the result of the development of the remaining points of the Eightfold Path, starting with the Right Views. We have written above about why the Suttavada *jhanas* are not the *jhanas* of the Suttas, and the Suttavada path is not the Noble Path.

Therefore, what is called *nirodha* in the Suttavada is rather a kind of very deep dreamless sleep (dreamless deepest sleep. At the same time, the state of neither-perception-nor-non-perception is a state of more superficial dreamless sleep, into which we enter directly from meditation. One of the authors of the article even knows a trucker driver who can enter the state of *suttavada-nirodha* (having no idea what it is), and uses it to quickly refresh his mind on the road. Needless to say, this person is far from enlightenment and from Buddhism in general.

¹ This is important because we cannot relax until the end, just by falling asleep, because ordinary sleep is a very active state.

However, this state (of quasi-nirodha) is important for the Suttavada, because the final evidence of the correctness of the understanding of the Buddha's Teaching is the fact that the method born from this understanding allows you to get a lot of people at one stage or another of awakening. And so, in the Suttavada, on average, a third of the participants in ordinary ten-day retreats gain the "experience of nibbana", that is, they find themselves at one stage or another of enlightenment. At least that's what they're told. And it happens precisely through such a quasi-nirodha.

According to the Suttavada, if a person has experienced a state of cessation of feeling-perception, that is, this very nirodha – as they understand it – upon leaving this state, he acquires the experience of nibbana, which is expressed precisely in this perception of "lights and flashes", which are interpreted as "perception of deep links of Dependent Origination", as well as a sense of renewal of perception. As a result, according to the Suttavada, the practitioner goes to the next of the eight stages of awakening.

In the Suttavada, the "distribution of the marks of Excellens" is purely formal: there is an experience that they call nirodha-nibbana (described above) – so there is enlightenment. One experience is sotapanna path, the second experience is sotapanna fruit, etc. According to the Suttas, the criterion of a person's being at one or another stage of enlightenment is (if we do not take the direct recognition of the mind by the Tathagata, who could directly see at what stage a person is) whether this person has one or another of the ten fetters – "self"-views, belief in rules and rituals, doubts about the Dhamma, dislike, sensual desire, etc.

As already mentioned, suttavada-nirodha is essentially a complete inhibition of the psyche, a kind of direct entry into a dreamless sleep, almost directly from the waking state. Just about a third of the participants in the retreats achieve a short-term experience of such a state during a normal ten-day retreat. And so, each of them is joyfully announced: "You have achieved enlightenment!" Naturally, people are terribly inspired, and begin to consider the Suttavada the best school in the world, and its understanding of the Teaching is the only true one.

In the eyes of the authors of this article, there were people who thus "reached" the stages of enlightenment immediately preceding the final enlightenment. That is, BV himself called them anagami. But further, since one of the authors had many opportunities to observe these people later, one could see that one of them went into spiritual money-making, the other uses drugs, drinks, smokes, likes to eat delicious food; violates regulations, even being a monk; or goes to Christianity or Hinduism. Someone else has nervous breakdowns. And this, again, is anagami, who, according to the Suttas, have gone beyond the Realm of Sensual Desires! Such behavior is hardly possible even for sotapanna¹.

But Bhante Vimalaramsi and Delson Armstrong themselves, as we have seen above, distort the Noble Eightfold Path, contradicting the Suttas in the most important moments. And these, according to the Suttavada, are anagami and arahant.

¹ See for example MN 48, Kosambiya Sutta.

But even if a person is given the shoulder straps of sotapanna, the first stage of awakening, the Suttavada teacher says: "You are already saved, congratulations!". One can imagine the whole tragedy of this situation: a person is looking for salvation, and they tell him that they have found it. He or she calms down, and after death turns out to be... where? This is not just a false hope, but a real death. Or, after a retreat, such a person is faced with the fact that little has changed in his worldview, and then he is disappointed in the Buddha's Dhamma. And thus, the only possibility for salvation is slammed shut.

Conclusion #11

The assignment of certain degrees of enlightenment in the Suttavada is completely unreasonable and, moreover, destructive for the "awarded". But it is a powerful marketing ploy that increases the popularity of the Suttavada among practitioners.¹

¹ And again we don't claim... and so on.

3.9. The danger of the Suttavada methods for health

The Suttavada states that a person can face mental or psychosomatic problems only in the practice of so-called single-point concentration, with which they vociferously oppose, but not in their method – TWIM. We will not go into the question now how adequate this dichotomy itself is – unidirectional concentration against TWIM (as you understand, it was born in the Suttavada, and practice shows that this dichotomy is false). But one way or another, the authors of this article having total statistics numbering maybe more than a thousand practitioners, can assure the reader that these problems occur in TWIM no less often than in other methods. We have seen such situations many times, including among those who studied in the USA in Dhammasukha, with Bhante Vimalaramsi himself.

In such cases – when a person has psychotic states or psychosomatic problems during the practice of TWIM – Suttavada teachers usually claim that a person simply does not do what he is told, they claim that he or she deviates from the method. Another option is that this person is basically unwell, and he cannot meditate. But the so-called single-point concentration schools say exactly the same thing in such cases. In fact, this is a typical case of abuse. In this way, you can clear yourself of suspicion in any case, and it is impossible to verify the correctness of these explanations in any way.

Thus, the advantages of TWIM in comparison with "single-point concentration", which Suttavada teachers constantly emphasize in every possible way, and in this case turn out to be, to put it mildly, exaggerated. But there is another important point here. Often psychotic states arise in meditation not because a person has some serious mental disorders, but because (as already mentioned in the previous sections), there are people with Painful Practice who encounter extremely dramatic states in meditation, especially if the practice is wrong. For example, the relaxation practice bring them only limited relief and then they can get a mental meltdown. We emphasize: according to the Suttas, the fact that a person's practice is painful does not make him incapable of learning at all, even more, there are people who have Painful Practice and at the same time rapid comprehension of the Dhamma, that is, quickly achieving liberation!

But since the Suttavada declares the exceptional pleasantness of the practice, then everything that goes beyond these limits is restricted by it. As a result, instead of an epiphany, a spiritual seeker receives a psychological trauma from which, perhaps, not everyone will recover. For such a person, it looks like this: "if I am incapable of even such a pleasant relaxing wonderful practice, then it means that I am not capable of anything at all in Dhamma." They give up and stop looking for the Dhamma, and even the potential opportunity to find a Noble Path is closed for them.

However, it also turns out to be closed for those who find false comfort in the Suttavada and turn out to be successful in this practice. And the more successful he turns out to be in Suttavada practice (and such a person is usually immediately recommended to teach), the more difficult it will be for him or her to get out from under the hassle of Suttavada.

Conclusion #12

The methods practiced in the Suttavada are no less dangerous for mental health than the methods of many other schools in Buddhism, with which the Suttavada opposes. Moreover, it is safe to say that if a person does not belong to the two types of people with Pleasant Practice, which were mentioned in this article earlier, then, with persistent practice in the Suttavada school, he or she will inevitably face certain mental problems. Those who belong to the mentioned two (out of forty-eight, recall!) types, although will not be harmed in a psychiatric sense, but will face other kinds of problems – cognitive or existential ones.

3.10. Does TWIM brings at least some benefit?

Once again, let's describe the course of practice in the Suttavada. The meditator learns to relax and immerse himself in pleasant states, which contributes to even greater calming and relaxation, disconnection of the body. At the same time, it is important to maintain some degree of awareness, because otherwise we will not be able to bring relaxation to a complete shutdown. This disconnection occurs in a state of maximum deep relaxation by itself, seemingly directly from the waking state.

Such disconnection in the Suttavada is considered the crowning state of the practice, nirodha, followed immediately by nibbana. A sort of transitional state when our mind is very calm and very subtle awakening and we can see some sorts of dream-like pictures is considered as the Base of Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception.

At the same time, if the practitioner falls asleep, that is, does not reach the desired level of relaxation, the teacher tells him to strengthen awareness. Here, from the point of view of the Suttavada, it is important to maintain balance (the famous analogy with a string that cannot be pulled either too hard or too weakly is usually given). If awareness is too acute, it inevitably generates tension (in the limit leading to all sorts of undesirable psychiatric or psychosomatic phenomena). Such tension in the Suttavada is considered a sign of craving.

Here the practitioner finds himself at a dead end. At best, he will learn to enter blackouts, at worst, he will go to the hospital, on average, he will just sleep in meditation (some practitioners never manage to learn not to fall asleep).

In fact, you cannot increase mindfulness above the minimum threshold (we remember that mindful is an absolutely good factor!) in your practice of the Suttavada, and it is impossible not because of the craving, but because during the Suttavada practice you drop your body. And you do that because of a false direction to complete relaxation and dropout.

And yet, many of those who have practiced the Suttavada method, in response to the arguments given here and in the previous sections, invariably ask the same question: "But then why did TWIM, with all its harmfulness, obviously have a beneficial effect on me?"

3.10.1. TWIM with brahmaviharas

This beneficial impression of TWIM practice is created for two reasons. The first is that the relaxation skill is, in general, useful in therapeutic terms. Relaxation is practiced, say, in psychotherapy in the method of self-suggestion, or in yoga nidra, and brings good results in terms of reducing anxiety and tension.

However reducing the level of tension makes sense only to some extent, but, in addition, this practice in itself has nothing to do with liberation from suffering in the context of the Dhamma, or has, but very limited. Why? Because the Suttas say that the goal of our practice is to achieve wisdom through concentration and understanding, and not through turning off the mind in

complete relaxation and letting go of everything. Nevertheless, we repeat, mastering the skill of relaxation in itself certainly brings some relief to some (not all!) stressed modern people.

However, since the Suttavada (TWIM) method is aimed not just at relaxation, but, so to speak, at "total" relaxation, those practitioners who have decided to do TWIM to the fullest, find themselves in the predicament. They can be clearly divided into three groups:

1. Those who have succeeded in the Suttavada practice, and they have achieved entry into a state of complete mental inhibition, which was discussed in section 3.8. Such people are considered in the Suttavada to have achieved high degrees of enlightenment. However, this is where the actual "benefit" of TWIM ends for them. The promised destruction of the fences does not happen.
2. Those who cannot achieve complete mental inhibition. They're simply stuck in their practice, their progress stops (however, as has just been said, practitioners of the first category are also stuck, having reached a certain "plateau").
3. Those whose attempt to achieve complete mental inhibition cause some undesirable effects. We talked about them in the previous section.

The second reason for the apparent beneficence of TWIM is that this method uses the general Buddhist practice of brahmaviharas – that is, cultivating loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. As already mentioned, the Suttavada has extremely distorted brahmaviharas, and in many ways this practice boils down to cultivating a feeling of some pleasant radiation. Even the sympathetic joy there is interpreted simply as a kind of "joy". Nevertheless, the practice of brahmaviharas is so beneficial that even in such a crippled form it brings some benefit to some – again, not all – people. Anyway, the practitioner can become at least a little softer, kinder, and so on, and this in itself is beneficial.

It should be noted that at present Dhammasukha has stopped teaching TWIM through breathing (so to speak, "suttavada-anapanasati"), explaining that anapanasati is much less effective than practice with brahmaviharas, and besides, the latter is suitable for all practitioners. But perhaps the true, and not declared, reason for this rejection of anapanasati is that without brahmaviharas, the inferiority of TWIM becomes obvious too quickly.

This, by the way, leads to another distortion of the Dhamma allowed in the Suttavada – this is the statement that meditation on brahmaviharas is supposedly more effective than meditation based on breathing. There is no such statement in the Suttas. The teachers of the Suttavada confirm their thesis by the fact that brahmaviharas are mentioned in the Suttas much more often than breathing. In response to this, let's compare the frequency of mentioning in the Suttas not even brahmaviharas, but only one of them – metta, which itself is mentioned much more often than others, with the frequency of mentioning meditation related to the body, or even satipatthana as such. So – the word "metta" versus the word "satipatthana", the most advantageous comparison for the Suttavada. In the search of suttacentral.net we get 125

against 200. So, satipatthana is mentioned more often than metta, and meanwhile, meditation based on the breath is an integral part of satipatthana.

But the fact is that metta is a quality of mind, which, as such, is not only one of the brahmaviharas, but also a separate semantic unit of the Dhamma (non-ill-will). In this capacity, it is mentioned much more often than part of the practice of brahmaviharas. For example, in sutta MN 62, the practice of metta is described as a separate practice aimed at overcoming ill will. And this is quite an ordinary case. If we look at the frequency of mentioning the word "brahmavihara" proper, it turns out that there will be only four texts in the entire Pali Canon in which it appears. Four! So which practice is more important in the Buddha's Teaching?

Nevertheless, this thesis itself – about the greater effectiveness of meditation with brahmaviharas than with breathing – corresponds to reality: FOR THE SUTTAVADA PURPOSES, brahmaviharas, as the Suttavada presents them, are actually more effective, since they allow in most cases to achieve faster mental inhibition due to immersion in a pleasant emotional state. After all, this is a typical relaxation technique used, say, in self-hypnosis.

And finally, the one more reason thanks to which TWIM seems to be so beneficial. This reason is the psychoinduction of which we were talking about earlier. This is non-hypnotic suggestion¹ – it is widely used in the teaching of the Suttavada. For example, when a teacher asks a practitioner leading questions about a meditative experience, such as "did you feel joy?..." "was it so that the body is almost not felt?..." And so on. And thus the practitioner gets the impression of constant joyful progress, which in fact is a fiction.

Let's imagine, for example, the practice of self-hypnosis – relaxation, filling ourselves with pleasant feeling, suggesting to ourselves that pleasant feeling radiates from us. If unpleasant thoughts and states arise – we turn away from them, relax and smile. This is, in fact, the practice of metta according to the Suttavada. Can such a practice be beneficial? Yes, in some cases and to some extent. If you, having escaped from the hustle and bustle of the city, devote ten days to such a practice, as happens at the Suttavada retreats, you will certainly feel refreshed and rested.

And now imagine that you are told: "This fullness of grace is only the initial stage. Your task is to achieve complete disconnection of the body and then of your mind. After that, you will gain some special benefits, and when you learn to switch off the psyche at any moment for an indefinite period of time, you will become a completely and finally liberated being." This is how the Suttavada sees the Buddha's Dhamma. Without metta, say, with the mindfulness of breathing, you would just learn to relax and go into shutdown. Such an approach would very quickly reveal its meaninglessness and methodological indistinguishability from self-hypnosis and going into a state of very deep dreamless sleep. That's why at the present time (it wasn't like that before) Suttavada has eliminated TWIM based on breathing, completely switching to teaching TWIM-brahmaviharas.

¹ However, as far as can be judged, most teachers do this without intent, simply because they were taught that way.

But at the same time, again, the question arises, is this the metta that the Buddha spoke about? For example, he compares the mind of metta with a spear, hard, unbending and sharp¹. Here we get, at best, a kind of downy relaxing blanket that envelops us in a soft and warm layer.

3.10.2. The "benefits" of the Forgiveness practice

The second type of such questions concerns the practice of forgiveness – some practitioners say that they have felt some benefit from this practice. Most of those who have tried to practice forgiveness the way it is basically taught in the Suttavada have not succeeded. Some have faced the development of psychotic states as a result.

The few who did manage it, practiced forgiveness in a form very similar to a sort of psychotherapy. In particular, one of the authors of this article (Oleg Pavlov) intuitively came to this option, after much torment and misunderstanding, when he was taking a course in the practice of forgiveness in 2015. After initially receiving instructions from the teachers of the Suttavada, he found that they were not working at all. Writing it off to the fact that he himself does not understand something, Oleg began to look for an option that would work. Naturally, at the same time he consulted with the teachers, and fortunately, they gave the opportunity to vary the practice within very wide limits, so that in the end the practice went far from the original version of the instructions. In particular, instead of the word "to forgive", Oleg introduced words "to accept" and "to let go". Also he allowed more free treatment of the person with whom the work was currently taking place. Nevertheless, the very narrow focus of the practice of forgiveness did not allow us to go too far from the very paradigm of "forgiveness" and, instead, let's say, directly proceed to the instructions set out in AN 5.161.

But one way or another, even the option that Oleg came to is not the option that is usually taught. Usually the practice of forgiveness is taught as simply as possible: you sit down, first you say to yourself, "I forgive myself" (in accordance with a particular topic, say, with not-understanding), and then, when a person pops up in your mind, I imagine him or her in front of me and say, "I forgive you" (in accordance with the topic), until a "catharsis" occurs, which few people actually have. Much more often a person is faced with overexertion, which is paradoxical, given the "ideology of relaxation" prevailing in the Suttavada.

As mentioned above, not so long ago, Bhante Vimalaramsi introduced a relaxed version of the practice of forgiveness, which, however, compared with the main version of this practice has only the advantage that the probability of overexertion is reduced.

A certain seeming beneficial effect can also be due to the "informal" part of the practice of forgiveness — when in everyday life we inspire ourselves: "I forgive this", in relation to everything and everyone around – people, weather, street, animals, etc. Through such practice, we have a chance to learn acceptance and patience.

In general, the only type of person who would definitely not need the practice of forgiveness is a socialized psychopath-narcissist, emotionally impenetrable, indifferent, but with a flexible

¹ See SN 20.5, Satti Sutta.

enough imagination to imagine that the light of grace and goodness emanates from him, which is considered metta in the Suttavada. Such a person already forgives himself everything and is completely satisfied with himself.

Conclusion #13

The usefulness of the TWIM practice is due only to the fact that it teaches relaxation skills, but many other psychotherapeutic methods, from self-hypnosis to Yoga Nidra, teach the same, and even more effectively. These skills have nothing to do with the teaching of the Buddha. Moreover, when, unlike psychotherapy, relaxation and inhibition of the psyche is put at the forefront, the results of such practice turn out to be the opposite of what the Buddha taught.

The rest of the advantages of the Suttavada practice are rather fictitious, seeming in nature. The same applies to the practice of Forgiveness. Its usefulness is proportional to the degree to which it begins to resemble psychotherapy, but no more. Moreover, unlike the main practice of the Suttavada, it can lead to overexertion.

Summary of the Conclusions

Conclusion #1

The Buddha knew how to teach the Dhamma to people of all 48 types and formulated the Dhamma exactly so that it would be understandable to people of all categories. At the same time, he had perfect command of the language (this is one of the four analytical knowledge that the Tathagata possesses). So, every word in his sermons is in its place, exactly as it should be for the transmission of the Dhamma. BV and DA projected their experience onto the Suttas, corrected them to fit their experience and understanding, and now they teach everyone in this way, believing that this is the true Dhamma. At the same time, the TWIM method preached by them, despite its apparent beneficence, is directed in the opposite direction to the one where the Eightfold Path of the Buddha leads. Different categories of practitioners get different results in TWIM – from the ability to fall into a pleasant disconnection to complete disintegration of the psyche, but in any case, this result is not beneficial. We will tell you more about this below.

Conclusion #2

If the Four Noble Truths had to be formulated differently – in different words, in a different order and/or in a different quantity, the Buddha would have done so. Thus, if BV and DA (or anyone else) reformulate the Four Noble Truths, this indicates their disbelief in the Three Jewels, which means that the statement that the Suttavada is the true teaching of the Buddha turns out to be false.

Conclusion #3

If it were necessary to call the Path Harmonious or Effective, the Buddha would have done so, instead of calling the Path Middle. Harmony and Efficiency may be safe in the short term (within one life) for practitioners with Pleasant Practice and an upward vector, but for practitioners with Painful Practice and individuals with a downward vector, the exclusion of the Middle is equivalent to signing a death sentence, at least in the spiritual life within this life.

Conclusion #4

There is right and wrong according to Dhamma. The Buddha never smoothed the corners, because he saw the real picture of the world, and not the vanilla sky of Pleasant Practice. The enlightenment of the Buddha was exactly right, it was very "inharmonious" and very "ineffective" as it is understood in the Suttavada.

Conclusion #5

The formulations of the Path given by Bhante Vimalaramsi and Delson Armstrong are not even comments on the Noble Eightfold Path, but simply completely different paths that either run counter to or are so far from the original from the Suttas that once again the question arises why

they should be called the Teachings of the Buddha at all. Unlike the Buddha's Dhamma, the BV and DA dhammas are imperfect and ill-conceived, and also lead in the wrong direction from the point of view of the Buddha-Dhamma, because they come from wrong views.

Conclusion #6

The specific techniques of meditation with brahmaviharas taught in the Suttavada are not found in the Suttas.

Conclusion #7

6R is not the Right Effort both in its features and in its action. Methods similar (but only partially) to 6R are described in the Suttas, but occupy a very modest position among the other methods. Moreover, in the way it is taught, 6R forms a method leading in the opposite direction to where the Buddha led.

Conclusion #8

The practice of forgiveness is rather a near-Christian practice that helps to strengthen the self-view, which means that from the point of view of the Dhamma, this method is harmful.

Conclusion #9

The concept of Dependent Origination is unreasonably put forward by the Suttavada to the first and key place in the Buddha's Dhamma. At the same time, the Suttavadin interpretation of the Dependent Origination does not correspond to the Suttas, but is formulated in such a way as to work as much as possible on the image of the Suttavada.

Conclusion #10

The jhanas of the Suttavada are not the jhanas of which the Buddha speaks, and of which the Tradition speaks. However, their interpretation in the Suttavada is such that it works as much as possible for the image of the Suttavada.

Conclusion #11

The assignment of certain degrees of enlightenment in the Suttavada is completely unreasonable and, moreover, destructive for the "awarded". But it is a powerful marketing ploy that increases the popularity of the Suttavada among practitioners.

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which were mentioned in this article earlier, then, with persistent practice in the Suttavada school, he or she will inevitably face certain mental problems. Those who belong to the mentioned two (out of forty-eight, recall!) types, although will not be harmed in a psychiatric sense, but will face other kinds of problems – cognitive or existential ones.

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About the authors

Paul Katorgin

He studied at Suttavada from 2016 to 2021, has completed about six retreats under the guidance of Bhante Vimalaramsi, and also studied under the guidance of Delson Armstrong. He took an intensive retreat in the USA, at the Dhammasukha Meditation Center. He was the initiator and one of the organizers of the first Suttavada retreat in the CIS. Created a website dhammasukha.ru (does not currently exist) and in every possible way supported financially and through his efforts the activity of the Suttavada.

Before the Suttavada, Pavel was engaged in other methods — hatha, raja, kriya, kundalini yoga, Vajrayana tantric practices, vipassana by Goenka (seven retreats), by M. Sayado. He was engaged in all cases as intensively as possible.

In 2011, while practicing kundalini yoga, he experienced a nervous breakdown, then, in 2021, while practicing the Suttavada method in the USA in a solitary retreat, under monastic vows and under the guidance of Bhante Vimalaramsi, he also experienced a similar nervous breakdown — the second one after the kundalini yoga case in 2011.

Before that, according to Bhante Vimalaramsi, Paul became "suttavada-sakadagami", despite the fact that Paul did not feel any difference between his suttavada-sotapana and suttavada-sakadagami states.

After the breakdown, Paul, already named suttavada-sakdagami, was told that he was doing something wrong and was unofficially banned from practicing meditation.

This fact — that kundalini and the practice of TWIM cause the same, obviously unwholesome effects in the end, made Paul think about whether this is Dhamma at all.

It is impossible that a real Dhamma could lead a person who sincerely and fervently wants to find and understand it to undesirable consequences. Moreover, after the retreat, Paul lost faith in the Three Jewels, in Kamma, in past lives, in Enlightenment, and even in the existence of the Buddha as a historical figure. This was incredible, given the level of trust in the Buddha and the Teachings that Paul had before. This period of loss of faith lasted about four months.

Having experienced for himself how the Split in the Sangha works, how those who have a strong faith can completely lose it as a result of when non-Dhamma is passed off as Dhamma, Paul began to study this issue closely.

After a thorough study of the Suttas, Paul came to understand that the Suttavada is not the Dhamma of the Buddha, and that the Suttavada is destructive and dangerous for serious practitioners seeking complete Liberation.

Oleg Pavlov

He studied at Suttavada from 2015 to 2021, studied with such Suttavada teachers as Bhante Vimalaramsi, David Johnson (BV's closest assistant), Khanti Khema. Assisted Bhante Vimalaramsi at one of the retreats. Since 2017, he has been teaching meditation according to the Suttavada method (he is a certified teacher), led six live and four online retreats, and also taught and advised many students privately. In addition, all this time he constantly communicated with Suttavadin teachers and students from other countries.

Before the Suttavada, starting in 1995, he got acquainted with various methods of practice – from Christianity to Zen Buddhism. The methods of "single-point concentration" at one time caused him a migraine status, then he "earned" the same status by practicing the Suttavada when he tried to find something else out from the subtle sleeping of NPNNP and suttavada-nirodha.

In Suttavada Oleg has reached the degree of "suttavada-anagami", but at the same time he notes phenomena that cannot be characteristic of anagami, and, in general, he does not see any noticeable difference in this regard with his pre-Suttavadin period. At the same time, Oleg easily enters the Suttavadin nirodha. However, this state, according to Oleg's observations, has more to do with entering the deep dreamless sleeping and does not have an effect that would be beneficial in terms of Dhamma. When Oleg tried to bypass this condition by continuing to work with the methods of the Suttavada, as a result, he again entered the migraine status. In other words, he was faced with a choice: either entering the deep dreamless sleeping, or the migraine status. Both are dead ends. In addition, the very fact of the resumption of migraine status in the framework of TWIM, just as it was in the framework of the methods of "single-point concentration", which Suttavada strongly opposes, made us think about whether the difference between these two methods is so fundamental. However, until recently Oleg attributed this fact to the possible physiological defects of his own brain.

In addition, communicating with his students and with students of other teachers, as well as with the teachers themselves, Oleg had the opportunity to observe the development of TWIM practice on the example of many hundreds if not thousands of people, that is, he had the opportunity to look at the situation statistically. The results of these observations were depressing: practice inevitably came to a dead end for everyone. In fact, not a single person who is in the Suttavada and known to Oleg escaped this fate.

In addition, he had the opportunity for quite long periods of time to observe those who, according to the criteria of the Suttavada, became a Noble Person. Here, too, there were no fundamental differences between the state of a person before and after enlightenment, and sometimes it even happened that the state became noticeably less balanced. Even at the retreat, where he assisted Bhante Vimalaramsi, he had the opportunity to observe from the inside the process of "giving out the marks of Excellence", and this already caused him skepticism. After that, when conducting his own retreats, he tried not to do it as rudely as it was in the case of Bhante Vimalaramsi, but nevertheless, he had to do it, since the "distribution of the marks" in the form of degrees of enlightenment and jhanas is part of the Suttavada doctrine.

All this made Oleg think about the nature of the Suttavada more closely and skeptically. However, the trigger of the final break with the Suttavada was Paul's story and subsequent communication with him, since by that time Paul had already formed a concrete understanding regarding the Suttavada. Paul's arguments laid on fertile ground and convincingly showed Oleg that the methods and doctrine of the Suttavada are not just "not very working" or "in little things not very consistent with the Buddha's Dhamma" (which maybe would be somehow acceptable), but that they directly contradict the Dhamma, bringing harm to practitioners. After that, Oleg immediately severed all ties with the Suttavada and publicly disavowed all his activities within this school.